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# **Selected Epistles**

**Edward Everett**

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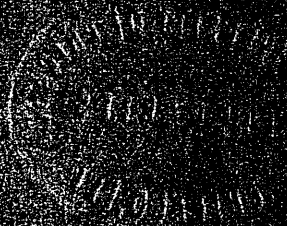
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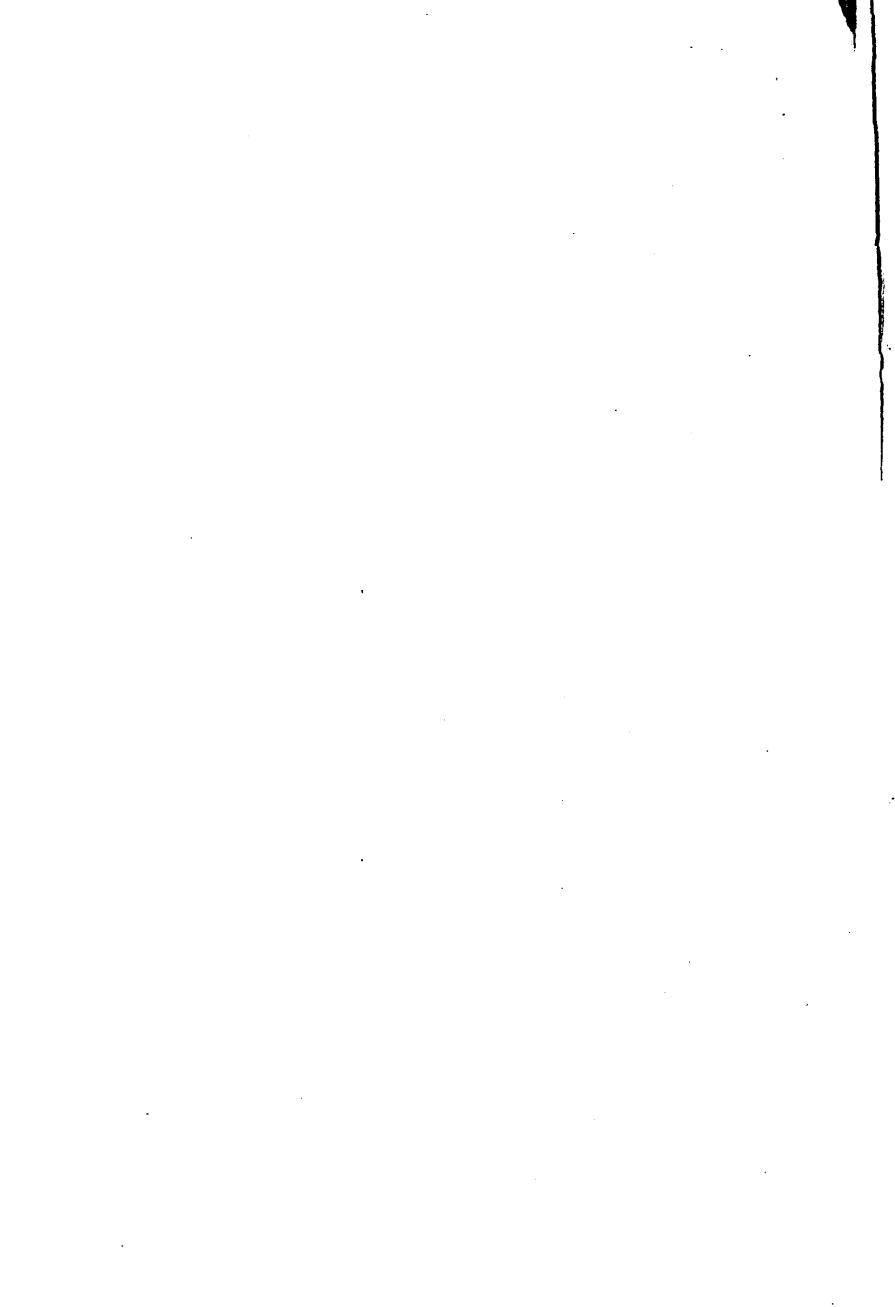
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# SELECTED EPISTLES OF PAUL

BRIEF INTRODUCTIONS, OUTLINES  
AND NOTES

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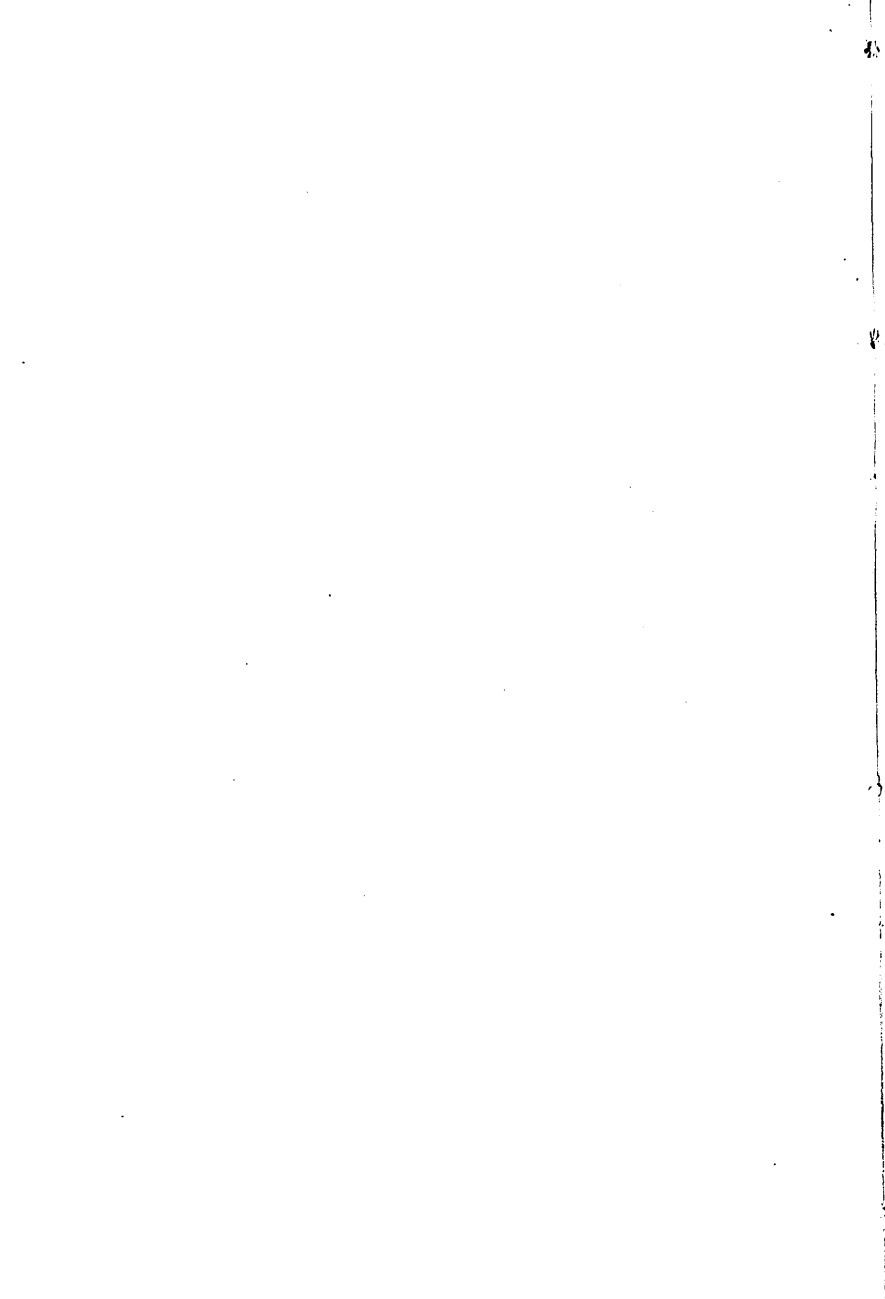
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## PREFACE

A new edition of my little book, *The Epistles of Paul*, published in 1911, having been called for, it has been decided to try to make it more suitable for study purposes by certain additions and omissions. By way of omission, the number of Epistles commented on has been reduced to six, which are taken as fairly representative of the varied aspects of Paul's teaching at successive periods of his career.

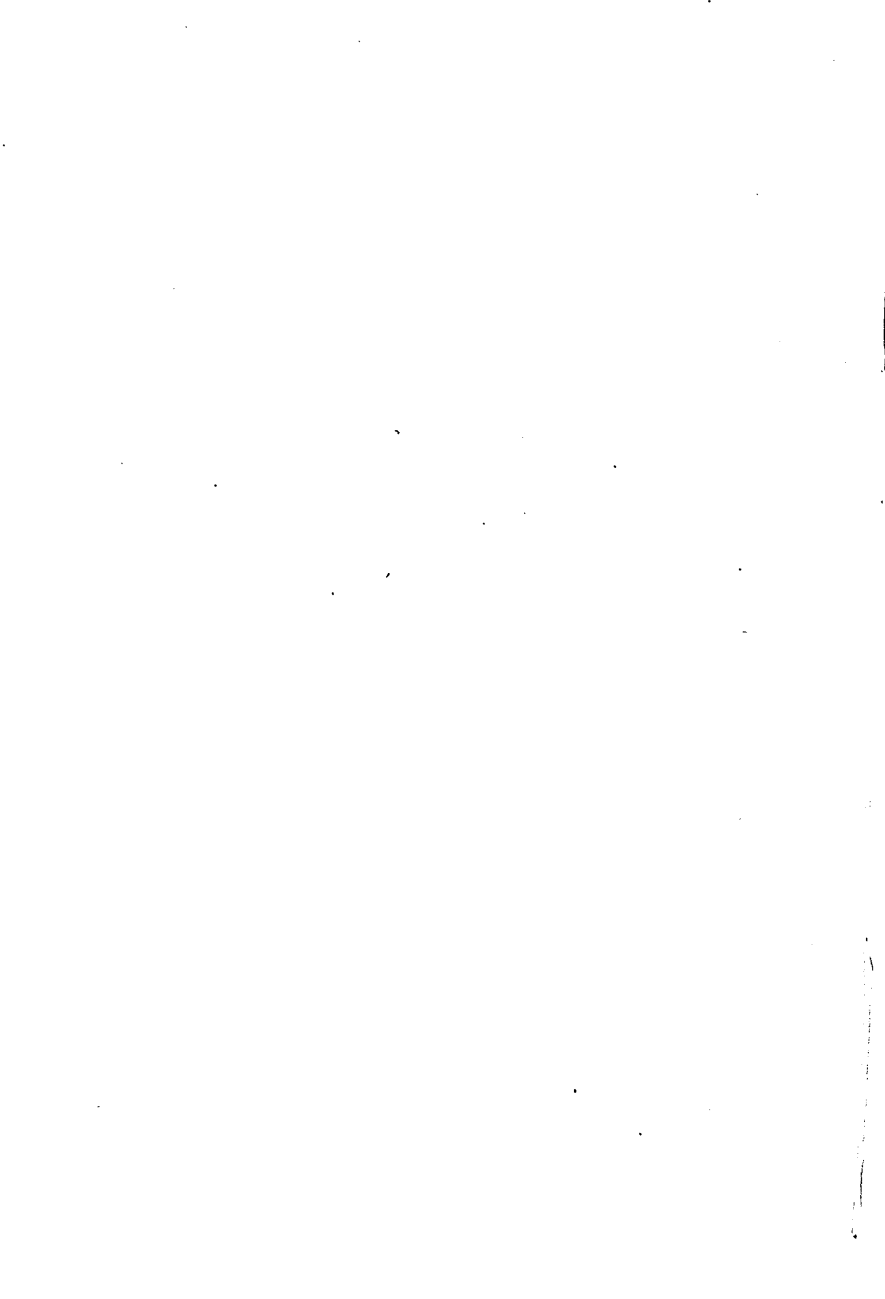
By way of addition, a somewhat detailed chronological table of Paul's life has been added, which, it is believed, will prove of value. Also some suggestions as to the study of Paul's Epistles, originally presented in a lecture delivered at the Young Women's Christian Association Training School in New York, have been placed at the threshold of the book in the hope that they may prove helpful to students.

The body of the commentary on the several Epistles remains substantially the same as in the first edition. The Introductions to 1 Thessalonians and 1 Corinthians have been recast to some extent. The table added to the Introduction to 1 Corinthians, will, it is hoped, do much to simplify the complicated question of Paul's correspondence with the Corinthian church.

That this little book may help to make the study of Paul interesting and profitable is my earnest wish and prayer.

Hartford Theological Seminary.  
December, 1914.

EDWARD E. NOURSE.



## SOME SUGGESTIONS AS TO THE STUDY OF PAUL'S EPISTLES

There are many points of view from which Paul's letters may be studied, and the number of suggestions that may be made regarding their study is correspondingly large and varied in character. They may be thought of mainly as sources for Christian theology, or mainly as of historical importance, or as valuable chiefly in a biographical way, and so on. But for the student who is not a specialist and who wishes to get the most out of his study of the Bible, the Epistles can be most profitably studied when the purpose is to become thereby as well acquainted as possible with their author, Paul himself. If one can so study Paul's letters that the mind of Paul, all the varied richness of his gifted nature, and the deep significance of his personal experiences come to be, at least in some measure, familiar so as to become sympathetically appreciated and appropriated, then Paul's theology and his place in history and any other important significance he may have will at once be better discussed and understood.

To throw out some suggestions as to this way of studying Paul's letters is the purpose of this paper:

1. Paul's Epistles are *letters* and should be studied as such.

The difference between an epistle and a letter is this: an epistle is *formally* literature; a letter is not. The purely personal matters, the merely temporal and local allusions are avoided in an epistle. Great care also is taken usually with the form and style. Words and phrases that belong mainly to the street or the shop are avoided. In an epistle the readers are viewed in a more impersonal, abstract way than is the case in a letter. A letter is apt to contain many things meaningless to any others than the writer and those addressed. They alone are acquainted with many of the circumstances which do not need to be described, but which are implied as well known to both parties. Such is not the case with an epistle, at least to any great degree.

Being *letters* the Epistles of Paul are not *treatises*, but *messages*, real messages, by a live man to living men and women,

## Study Suggestions

concerning real issues in which both are interested. In every case also they were occasioned by special circumstances (not vague, general reasons), which were of course well known to the writer and his readers even if at times they remain obscure to us moderns.

As real letters, they were written in a conversational, popular style, such as every one could appreciate and understand. Paul did not write in a special dialect, coined or found by him, with words of very limited or peculiar meaning known only to a select few, and to be designated later as "biblical Greek." Paul's gospel was for common men, and his converts were but common men and women. He preached to them in the everyday language of the shop and market-place and he used the same simple vocabulary when he wrote letters to them. We are finding out a good many facts about this matter in these days. Paul was indeed a deep thinker. But when he wrote he did not use a lexicon and grammar. He simply used the ordinary words used in ordinary conversation and made his meaning clear through these. His closeness to everyday life is revealed in the very form of his letters. Recently, many ancient private letters of the common people of that Græco-Roman world have come to light, some written on fragments of pottery, some on lead, some written with pen and ink on papyrus paper just such as Paul must have used. For example, compare the following short letter\* of a Roman soldier with any of Paul's:

"Antonios Maximos to Sabina his sister, abundant (lit. much) greeting.

"Before all else I pray that you may be well. As for me, I am well. While I was making mention of you before the gods that are here, I received a brief letter (a note) from Antoneinos our fellow citizen. And having learned that you were prospering I rejoiced greatly. And I am allowing nothing to hinder me from writing to you of the welfare of both me and mine.

"Greet (salute) Maximos many times, and Copres my master.

"My wife Auphidia salutes thee and also Maximos my son, whose birthday is on the thirtieth of Epeip according to the Grecian calendar, also Elpis and Fortunata (salute thee).

"Salute the master . . . . .  
(Six lines illegible.)

"I pray that you may be prospered."

---

\* Deissmann, *Licht von Osten*, page 125.

## Study Suggestions

Notice how the general framework here is identical with that which we find in Paul's letters. The personal signature and address at the beginning, the greeting (which Paul always makes more profoundly religious), the prayer (often in Paul preceded by a thanksgiving\*), with the mention of prayer for the addressed, then the message proper, and the closing of the letter by salutations and something like a benediction—all these belong also to the framework of the Pauline letters.

Such facts as these show how close and vital was Paul's touch with the common everyday life of his time. They also show that his letters were not books or formal literary productions, but real letters.

But more than this: it is evident that because Paul's Epistles are really letters, their *contents* are as they are, and they do not contain many things one might think they should contain and which many have tried to read into them. Their contents are just what, under the circumstances, was to be expected. Full, exhaustive discussions were not in place. In each church certain phases of doctrine or life called for some special message from the Apostle. His letters deal with such points, not with everything pertaining to Christian belief. Also he wrote regarding such subjects just and only what under the circumstances seemed necessary. This makes them often seem to us to be incomplete, but at the same time should enable us to interpret what they do contain more correctly.

The practical suggestion that grows out of all this is that each one of Paul's letters should be studied in the light of the circumstances that called it forth. The nearer we can get to the conditions, problems, and points of view of those to whom Paul wrote any given letter, the more real the message of the letter becomes, and the more real becomes the man who wrote it. His moods and motives, his methods, his thoughts, his personality, all become clearer to us and we come to feel as though we had been with him when he wrote.

This is the reason why careful students of Paul lay so much stress on an *introduction*. It is necessary to get as clear a view as possible of all the circumstances connected with any one or

---

\*In an earlier letter of this same Antonios Maximos a thanksgiving for rescue from shipwreck follows the prayer.

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all of Paul's letters, and the investigation that seeks to do this and places its results before the reader is called *introduction*.

Another practical suggestion is that Paul's letters should be studied in the order of their origin. You would so read a batch of letters from a friend in order to fully appreciate them. This is just because they are letters and each belonged to a particular time and to a *life* that was moving forward continually. The earlier letters throw light on the later, and studied in their natural order they reveal the life work and progressive personal experience of their great author more fully than these can be known in any other way.

2. The second general suggestion is that in the study of Paul's letters great attention should be paid to the experiential element.

For centuries these Epistles have been studied as a source for theology. But there was something that always lay behind Paul's theology and that was his experience, first as a strict Pharisee and then as a Christian. The natural order in Paul was experience first and theology next, and as a result, to get at Paul's theology we must come to it through a knowledge of his experience.

Now, Paul's letters are an almost inexhaustible source of information for this purpose. They abound in statements that reflect and reveal what the Apostle was actually feeling and realizing in himself as to the meaning and effects of his Christian faith. Many portions, which when read as mere impersonal statements of abstract truth seem lifeless and of only theoretical importance, take on an entirely new significance when they are seen to be reflections of his own vital, deep, and rich experience of Christ. The study of Paul's Epistles as largely growing out of Christian experience makes their study not only interesting but fascinating. The inevitable result is that in thus knowing the Apostle's own experience more intimately we find ourselves influenced by it and sharing with him his communion with Christian truth.

This aspect of the study of Paul is of such supreme importance that it may be well to show how in particular instances the experiential element is fundamentally involved in Paul's statements.

## Study Suggestions

For example, in Paul's letters from first to last the largest possible claims are made for Christianity. Was this theory or dogma only, or was it the result of experience? How differently these claims read when we remember what experience Paul himself had had of Christianity, how he had found it doing for him what his once boasted Pharisaism had never been able to do! Paul had found for himself in Christianity a new life, a new strength, a new vision of God, a new sense of sin and many other things. And there was also his wonderful experience of what Christianity—as he preached it—was able to do for others, Jews and more especially heathen. Such words as we read in 1 Thess. i. 5, 9 and ii. 13 or in 1 Cor. ii. 1-5 are not mere theory; they state exactly what Paul had seen accomplished by or through his preaching of the Gospel. If we stop to realize all that is meant by these passages we shall certainly see how large a part experience of the *Gospel in action* had to do with Paul's theory of the value of that Gospel.

Let us take another example. The main argument in Galatians is intended to prove the complete independence and self-sufficiency of the Gospel versus Judaism. Paul seeks to show the insufficiency of Judaism. Now on a first reading it might seem as if there is a good deal that is purely theoretical about this. But on close examination it is seen that the argument is almost entirely from experience and the foundation is altogether so. His own experience, as of one who had known Judaism most intimately, matched as it was by that of Peter and the other Apostles, even more than they realized, and by that of the Galatians themselves, and even of Abraham, was a solid rock on which to build his doctrine of justification. The same thing is seen in the expansion and completion of the doctrine of Galatians which we find in Romans. Underlying that wonderful presentation of the Gospel as the "righteousness of God by faith" in Romans i. 8, there was an actual first-hand knowledge of that Gospel in Paul's own soul and as he had seen it in others' lives. So far as this involved the inability of Judaism to give peace and satisfaction, Paul spoke out of the bitter experience reflected in Romans vii. If we read with Romans, Phil. iii. 3-11 or 2 Cor. xi. 22ff. we may realize how much of himself Paul put into that great letter to the Roman church.



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The same is true of Paul's judgments about the heathen world. We have to speak theoretically about that ancient paganism. Paul did not. He knew it from first-hand acquaintance. He spent many years in the midst of it. Most of his converts were from heathenism. His most intimate friends and fellow workers had been pagans. So when Paul speaks of the sin and vice and ignorance and darkness of the pagan world, he is not theorizing. He was no mere doctrinaire on such subjects.

This experiential element can be detected almost everywhere in Paul's letters. The *way* he formulates a truth often reveals how that truth was first an experience and then a doctrine. Take, e.g., 2 Cor. iv. 6. What an experience of a new vision of God lies behind such words! And so it is always when Paul touches upon the *new* things in Christianity, the new ideas brought to light, and the new life revealed in the Gospel. When Paul accepted Christ—or passed through the experience he describes in Gal. i.—he became a *new* man (2 Cor. v. 17). All his old ideas were passed through the crucible, as it were, of this new experience, and such as stood the test were so transformed as to be almost new. He found himself in possession of a new conception of God. Much of the framework of his old Jewish idea of God remained, but it now served for a new building. A sense of God, in which such truths as center about the words father, love, fellowship were *dominant*, and in which the personal power of God in one's life was *realized* (1 Cor. i. 23, 24) now filled his soul. In some way it had all become illumined, made very real and brought close to him through the giving of himself to Christ. The innumerable sentences that flash forth these truths in Paul's letters are not theory or dry dogma, but reflection of his very life, of his deepest experiences.

The new idea about *Jesus* that came to Paul in his experience outside the wall of Damascus should need no mention. But what can measure the difference between his idea of Jesus as a man of Nazareth who had been justly condemned to a disgraceful death and his experience of him as the *Son of God*? Behind Paul's theory of Christ lay this living experience of him as the Son of God. On that he built his theory, by that he tested it.

Now, when we read in Galatians and Romans of *freedom*

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from (the) law, and of the *liberty* of the sons of God, and of sonship (or adoption), are we reading only theological terms or of theories? No! We are reading first of all the experience of one who had been in bondage in prison, as it were, had felt the sentence of death in himself, and then had found his liberty and his life and with that experience a new range and direction for his thought and endeavor.

It is the same with other great terms, such as *peace*, *power*, *knowledge*, and above all, *love*.

We all know well and admire Paul's beautiful eulogy on love in 1 Cor. xiii. How many read it as reflecting Paul's own experience, or ask where Paul learned that theory of love? It would hardly be an overstatement to say that every line of 1 Cor. xiii. reflects what Paul himself had endured or experienced in his apostolic career. When we think of Paul as the zealous, fiery, uncompromising persecutor of Christians and then read 1 Cor. xiii., we must say: this is not the same man, or, if the same, he has become a new creation. But just follow Paul's career from that day outside of Damascus gate to the time when he wrote 1 Cor. xiii. and on after that to the very end, and you will see that love had become the greatest thing in his life. He wrote in 1 Cor. xiii. just what he lived and had felt. But whence did he get that new principle of love? Two passages are very significant here, Rom. viii. 35-39 and Eph. iii. 18, 19. He learned it in Christ. He had felt it as the love of God in his own soul and he had found himself growing, growing into an ever fuller knowledge of it, and yet always more deeply conscious that he could never know it all. He resigned himself to this love and at the same time felt it as a controlling, energizing power moving and constraining him (cf. 2 Cor. v. 14) to the utmost endeavor and making him capable of the extremest sacrifices.

There is another feature of this experiential element in Paul that is not always appreciated as it should be, and that is that Paul's experience was a *growing* one.

It surely is not an accident that the earliest of Paul's letters, those to the Thessalonians, are comparatively simple in character, while the later ones, Colossians and Ephesians, deal with the most profound subjects. A *progressive* arrangement of Paul's teachings, corresponding to the progress of Paul's experience,

## Study Suggestions

could easily be made out. This can be most naturally explained as due to Paul's own growth in spiritual attainment. In fact, he speaks of this himself, plainly, in Phil. iii. It is on the basis of this fact of growth, as he discerned it in himself, that we can understand his ideal way of speaking to his converts. Paul calls them "saints," etc., not because they were already perfect in character or knowledge, but because they were *growing* unto perfection. What Paul had found true of himself he was sure would prove true in the case of his converts—that the grace of God had not been bestowed on them in vain, that the Spirit would do his work. Paul's confidence in this result that a soul once having put its trust in Christ will be led and guided constantly by the Spirit, and that the full realization of the new life in Christ was certain to take place, is nothing less than wonderful.

So it is that we read so much in Paul of *growth* and *edification* and so many times find that word *abound* (or abundant and abundantly). Such things were not mere rhetoric or due to the enthusiasm of an ardent spirit. They rested on and grew out of the solid facts of Paul's own religious experience. What faith in Christ had done for him he was sure it could and would do for others.

In the same way we should take Paul's words about the lessons and experiences of trial, suffering and disappointment. Take such golden words as Rom. viii. 18. On what were they based except on what Paul himself had learned through suffering? In those trials and sorrows in which his life abounded he had experienced such foretastes of the glory that shall be that he dared to formulate that experience in terms of a doctrine.

And finally, it was experience that lay behind certain great teachings which at first thought might not be taken to have an experiential element. For example, take Paul's teaching as to the future, the perfection of glory to which the soul will attain through Christ. What is all that splendid assertion and assurance of which we find so much in Paul but simply the projection of experiences of the present as certain to take place along the same lines into the future? Paul had tasted the first fruits, he had the pledge (2 Cor. i. 22, v. 5), he was sure that the full harvest would be reaped and the pledge redeemed. Or consider

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his teaching as to the person of Christ, about which some modern scholars are saying some very foolish things. In this what has Paul done but gone out from the *center of his own experience* of Christ toward the circumference, that would, if it could be drawn, define what Christ is? Paul followed the radii of his own personal contact with Christ in the direction they seemed to lead. He could not follow them the whole way nor did he complete the circle, but he has given us far more than the application of a messianic theory to one or two unimportant facts of history or personal experience. If one reads 2 Cor. iv. 16-v. 21 as growing out of Paul's own experience and applies what he thus discovers to other passages, such as Colossians i., they will become luminous with a new light.

What is contended for here is a greater naturalness, a more real and vital method of studying the letters of Paul. There is so much artificiality, not to say superficiality, in vogue in Bible study that one wonders sometimes that any results at all are gained. In the Old Testament the prophetic books, and in the New the Epistles, seem to be peculiarly liable to be studied in an artificial way. This is largely because it is forgotten that the prophets and apostles spoke as living men to actual situations and conditions, to real flesh and blood men and women of their own day. If we can see Paul as his readers saw him, and if we can see them as they were in Paul's mind as he wrote to them, then we can realize what his letters were and what they contained. We can get hold of it and appropriate it as in no other way. Now, this can be done to a large extent if the right method and spirit are followed in the study of Paul. And when Paul's letters come to be known when studied in this way, one will need to sit at the feet of very few other teachers to know what genuine Christianity is.

3. Two general suggestions have been made thus far: first, that Paul's letters should be studied as letters rather than as epistles, and second, that they should be studied with an eye to the experiential element which they contain. To these, one more may be added, namely, that in the study of Paul's letters there should be a constant effort to get personally acquainted with Paul himself. There is a man revealed in these letters whose equal has rarely, if ever, appeared on earth. Next to

## Study Suggestions

his Master, Paul is the greatest personality of Christian history. It is one of the delights of the study of Paul's letters that we are thereby becoming acquainted with this great soul. What can be more profitable than to try to know this man as he really was? This can be done. Almost every line of his letters can be made to tell us something about the man himself. And as one gathers up what each line and sentence and whole letter furnishes there gradually takes form before one's mental vision the outline of a character, wonderfully endowed and developed and yet very, very human, one who commands our admiration and also our affectionate devotion. Let us study the Epistles to know Paul, for as we know him we will know ourselves better and know better what Christ can do for us and make of us.

## CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF THE LIFE OF PAUL

- I. His early life, to his conversion, which took place, probably, when he was between thirty and thirty-five years of age.

### A. D.

- 1 (?) Sometime near this date Paul was born at Tarsus, the chief city of the Roman Province of Cilicia in southeastern Asia Minor. His parents were Jews. His father possessed both the municipal and Roman citizenships and was, therefore, a man of some standing, probably one of the most prominent and zealous of the Jewish citizens of Tarsus.
- 1-15 (approximately) Paul's boyhood, spent in Tarsus. Here, as a wide-awake boy, he came to know much of the general character of the Gentile world, its manners, customs and ideas, as Tarsus was an important center of Greek learning and culture.  
At Tarsus, also, it is likely that Paul learned his trade of tentmaking (Acts xviii. 3).
- 15 (?) Goes to Jerusalem to study the Law, probably with the purpose of eventually becoming a rabbi, or authoritative teacher of the Law.
- 15-30 Paul a disciple of Gamaliel, one of the greatest of Jewish rabbis, "being instructed according to the strict manner of the Law of our fathers" (Acts xxii. 3) and "advancing in Judaism beyond many of his fellows." (Gal. i. 14.)  
During this period Jesus accomplished His ministry and was crucified at Jerusalem.
- 32-35 (?) Paul becomes a most determined opponent of the infant Christian church. He took a prominent part in the trial and execution of Stephen. He then became a leader in a persecution of the Christians in and about Jerusalem and at last planned to extend

## Chronological Table of the Life of Paul

the persecution to neighboring districts, his intent being to destroy the Christian faith (Acts vii. 58; viii. 1; ix. 1-2, 13-14; xxii. 4-5; Gal. i. 13, 23).

### II. The conversion of Paul.

- 35 (?) This may be set down approximately as the year of Paul's conversion. For the account see Acts ix., xxii., and xxvi., also Gal. i. 11-20. Paul's change of faith was made instantly, but the whole process of change from one system of belief to another was more gradual. Paul had to think his way out of his old Jewish theology into his new belief in God as revealed in Christ. In all, this seems to have taken upwards of three years as follows:
- 35 The experience on the road near Damascus. Paul believes that Jesus is the Son of God.
- 35-37 In Arabia, in retirement. Here Paul solved the problem of his new faith (Gal. i. 17).
- 38 Returns to Damascus. Preaches his new faith. Hostility of the Jews compels him to flee (Acts ix. 22-25; 2 Cor. xi. 32-33). Paul goes to Jerusalem to confer with Peter, probably to get from him a full account of Jesus' teaching and works.

### III. Paul the Apostle (38-66?) A. D.

With the information gained from Peter, Paul's preparation for his work as an Apostle was practically complete. His subsequent career may be divided into six periods, as follows:

#### 38-47 1. His first experiences as a Christian missionary and teacher.

- At first in Syria and Cilicia and later at Antioch of Syria. We have only a few brief notices regarding this long period of about eight years.
- 38-45 In Syria and Cilicia, his home land (cf. Gal. i. 21-23; Acts xi. 25).

## Chronological Table of the Life of Paul

- 46-47 At Antioch, where he became one of the prominent teachers of the church.
- 46 (?) Mission to Jerusalem with Barnabas to carry relief to the poor brethren in Judea (Acts xi. 29-30).
- 47-49 2. The first missionary journey and its sequence, the apostolic council of Jerusalem.**
- 47-48 The first missionary journey (Acts xiii.-xiv.).  
Barnabas, Paul and John Mark sent out by the church of Antioch.
- 47 Mission in Cyprus (Acts xiii. 4-12).
- 47-48 Mission in South Galatia, churches founded in Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe and possibly in Perga (Acts xiii. 13-xiv. 25).
- 48 Return to Antioch of Syria (Acts xiv. 26-28). On this mission, for the first time the Gospel was presented directly to the Gentiles (cf. Acts. xiii. 46).
- 49 The Council at Jerusalem.  
At this council the course of Paul and Barnabas was approved and full sanction given to the mission to the Gentiles (Acts xv. 1-29; Gal. ii. 1-10).
- 49 (?) Paul at Antioch publicly rebuked Peter for inconsistency in his attitude toward the Gentile-Christians (Gal. ii. 11-21).
- 49-52 3. The second missionary journey.**
- Paul and Silas started from Antioch, went through Cilicia and South Galatia, where Paul revisited the churches founded on the first journey. Here Timothy joined them. Then they may have gone into Old Galatia and organized the churches to whom Paul later wrote the Epistle to the Galatians. Later they crossed over into Europe and after a stay of nearly two years in Macedonia and Achaia they returned to Antioch.
- 49-50 The mission in South Galatia and elsewhere in Asia Minor (Acts xv. 40-xvi. 8).
- 50-51 In Macedonia, churches founded at Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea (Acts xvi. 9-xvii. 14).



## Chronological Table of the Life of Paul

- 51-52 In Achaia. First at Athens and then at Corinth where Paul remained over 18 months (Acts xvii. 15-xviii. 18).

While at Corinth Paul wrote 1 and 2 Thessalonians.

- 52 Return to Antioch. Brief stop at Ephesus on the way (Acts xviii. 18-22).

### 52-56 4. The third missionary journey.

Leaving Antioch Paul once more visits the Galatian churches and then goes down to Ephesus, the great metropolis of the province of Asia. After staying here upwards of three years he revisits the churches of Macedonia and Achaia and then returns to the East, but to Jerusalem, not Antioch, in order to carry an offering from his Gentile churches to the churches of Judea (Acts xviii. 23-xxi. 17).

- 52-53 Paul revisits the Galatian churches and elsewhere in central Asia Minor (Acts xviii. 23; xix. 1).

- 53-55 Paul at Ephesus. While at Ephesus Paul appears to have superintended a general evangelistic work that covered the whole of the Province and extended back into the interior as far as, e.g., such cities as Colossæ and Laodicea (Acts xix. 2-22).

- 54-55 While at Ephesus Paul wrote 1 Corinthians. For the various stages of his correspondence with the Corinthian church during this period, see the Introduction to 1 Corinthians (page 41).

- 55 (spring) The disturbance caused by Demetrius, the silversmith (Acts xix. 23-41).

- 55 (spring) Paul leaves Ephesus for Macedonia (Acts xix. 21; xx. 1).

- 55 (summer) In Macedonia. Writes 2 Corinthians (i.e., chapters i.-ix.) and Galatians (Acts xx. 2).

- 55 (fall and early winter) Paul in Corinth (Acts xx. 2-3). While here he writes Romans, planning to visit Rome after his trip to Jerusalem (Acts xix. 21; Romans xv. 22ff).

## Chronological Table of the Life of Paul

56 (early months) In Macedonia and *en route* for Jerusalem. Brief stops at Troas, Miletus, Tyre, Ptolemais, and Cæsarea. Arriving at Jerusalem he presents the offering of his Gentile churches and is gladly welcomed by the church (Acts xx. 3-xxi. 17).

### 56-61 5. Paul a prisoner.

First in Palestine, then on the voyage to Rome and, lastly, for two years in Rome awaiting the decision of his case (Acts xxi. 18-xxviii.).

56 (spring) Paul arrested in Jerusalem (Acts xxi. 18-xxii. 29).

56-58 Paul kept under guard at Cæsarea, the seat of the Roman administration of Palestine,—Felix, the governor, delaying to decide his case (Acts xxiii. 1-xxiv. 27).

58 Festus, the successor of Felix, hears Paul's case and grants his appeal to the Emperor (Acts xxv.-xxvi.).

58 (fall)-59 (spring) The voyage to Rome. The storm and shipwreck at Malta. Winter spent at Malta. Arrival at Rome in early spring (Acts xxvii. 1-xxviii. 16).

59-61 Paul in Rome, awaiting the Emperor's decision of his case. Allowed a certain degree of freedom (Acts xxviii. 16, 30-31). To these two years belong the following events:

(1) Paul's appeal to the Jews of Rome (Acts xxviii. 17-29).

(2) Paul is visited by Christian workers from the East, among others by Epaphras of Colossæ.

(3) Paul converts Onesimus, a runaway slave, the property of Philemon, a Christian of Colossæ.

(4) Paul sends Onesimus back with a letter to his master, Philemon, and also writes to the church at Colossæ. Sends a somewhat similar letter to a circle of churches in Asia—the so-called Epistle to the Ephesians. These two church letters he sends East by the hand of Tychicus.

## Chronological Table of the Life of Paul

- 60-61 (5) Near the end of this period Epaphroditus of Philippi visits Paul and is taken quite sick. On his recovery Paul sends a message to the church at Philippi.
- 61 Paul acquitted and released.
- 61-? 6. **Renewal of missionary work.**
- Second arrest, imprisonment and execution. For this period of Paul's life we have no certain data. Possibly the following order of events may represent the facts.
- 61-62 or 63 In the East once more, visiting the larger churches and working in new fields, e.g., Crete and Epirus.
- Writes 1 Timothy to Timothy, who seems to have been in Ephesus.
- Writes to Titus, who had been left by Paul in Crete.
- Winter of 62, 63, or 64. Spent at Nicopolis of Epirus (Titus iii. 12).
- 63-64 (?) Missionary work in Spain (?) (cf. his earlier plan stated in Rom. xv. 23, 28).
- 64 The burning of Rome. Nero blames the Christians and persecutes them.
- 64-66 (?) Paul again arrested—this time because he was a Christian. Imprisonment at Rome. Visited by friends such as Onesimus (2 Tim. i. 17). Writes 2 Timothy asking Timothy to come to him as soon as possible.
- 66 (?) Paul suffers martyrdom.

**THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS**



## I. THESSALONIANS

The earliest of Paul's extant letters, written about 50 A. D.  
Probably the earliest of the New Testament books and  
therefore our earliest Christian document.

### 1. Introduction

#### 1. The Church of Thessalonica.

##### (1) Its founding by Paul.

The story of the founding of the church of Thessalonica is told in Acts xvii. 1-9. On many points the account by Luke can be supplemented by Paul's own statement in 1 Thess., chapters i. and ii.

After leaving Philippi, where they had organized the first Christian church on European soil (Acts xvi. 12ff), Paul and Silas (possibly Timothy remained at Philippi a little longer) went on, following the great Roman military road, through Amphipolis and Apollonia to Thessalonica, the modern Salonika, the chief city of the Roman province of Macedonia and the residence of the Roman proconsul. It was a "free" city, governed by its own magistrates, called politarchs. The Jews in it were sufficiently numerous to have a synagogue (Acts xvii. 1). Paul visited this synagogue and during three successive Sabbaths sought to persuade the Jews that Jesus was the Christ (Acts xvii. 2f). Some were convinced by his arguments, but his chief success was among the "devout" Greeks, i.e., serious-minded pagans who found much to admire in the Jewish faith, but did not fully accept Judaism, and other Gentiles, both men and women (Acts xvii. 4; cf. 1 Thess. i. 9).

Paul immediately took steps to organize the believers into a Christian church. Acts gives no account of this, but the general character of 1 Thess. implies a stay of considerable length during which Paul sought to instruct his converts in the essentials of Christian belief and conduct. During his entire stay among them he supported himself by working at his trade as tentmaker (cf. Acts. xviii. 3) so as not to be a burden to them

## I. Thessalonians

(1 Thess. ii. 9). His needs were also partly met by aid sent from his converts at Philippi (Phil. iv. 16).

(2) Difficulties with the Jews. Paul leaves Thessalonica.

The success of the Christian missionaries in winning converts from the synagogue and the Gentile population was so great that the Jews were aroused to violent opposition. An attempt was made to stir up the populace against the Christians and a mob of Jews and their sympathizers assaulted the house of Jason, probably one of Paul's Jewish converts with whom he was lodging, in the hope of getting possession of Paul and Silas and bringing them before the popular assembly. Failing in this, they haled Jason and other friends of Paul before the politarchs, charging them with harboring men who were teaching doctrines contrary to the imperial authority, especially that there was another "King," namely, Jesus. Such a charge was too serious to be trifled with; consequently Jason was compelled to give bonds that nothing further would be done to disturb the peace (Acts xvii. 5-9).

Probably to avoid further trouble with the Jews of the city, Paul and Silas decided to leave the infant church to maintain itself without them, while they sought new fields of labor. The thoroughness with which Paul had labored among them is evidenced by the fact that in spite of severe persecutions on the part of the Jews, the young church continued to grow in numbers and strength. Paul had not labored in vain.

(3) Paul's continued interest in their welfare.

Paul and Silas went on to Berea, a city about fifty miles west of Thessalonica, where they again attempted Christian preaching in the Jewish synagogue. Here their success was even more marked than it had been in Thessalonica, but on the arrival of hostile Jews from that place Paul was again compelled to leave a church as yet only imperfectly organized and instructed (Acts xvii. 10-14).

Leaving Silas and Timothy at Berea, Paul went down the coast. Probably he was desirous of returning to Thessalonica (cf. 1 Thess. ii. 18), but deciding that this was unsafe, he took ship for Athens, sending word to Silas and Timothy to rejoin him as quickly as possible.

Comparing Acts xvii. 15; xviii. 5 with 1 Thess. iii. 1-6, it seems

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necessary to suppose that Luke's summary account has omitted some of the intermediate steps between Paul's departure from Berea and his vigorous prosecution of his work in Corinth. Timothy and Silas apparently rejoined Paul at Athens. But Paul was so anxious to learn about the condition in Thessalonica that he sent Timothy thither and perhaps at the same time Silas was sent to Philippi (see Ramsay).

When the two rejoined Paul the latter was already in Corinth. The report of both messengers greatly comforted and cheered Paul, who now threw himself into the work of evangelizing Corinth with renewed zeal and hope. It was during his stay of nearly two years in Corinth that he wrote the two letters to the church at Thessalonica.

(4) The first letter of Paul to the church at Thessalonica.

(a) The occasion or reason for the letter.

While Timothy's report gave Paul great cause for joy in that it revealed how loyal and devoted to their new-found faith the Thessalonian converts were, it also showed him that on certain points the young church was in sore need of advice. These two considerations, on the one hand to express to the church his joy and thankfulness over the good news he had received from them, and, on the other, to instruct them still further in matters of the Christian faith determined the contents of the letter he dispatched to them almost immediately after receiving Timothy's report.

(b) Outline and general character of 1 Thessalonians.

The Epistle, while a genuine letter written out of a full heart, is not without plan. It is easily seen to consist of two main parts, the first (chs. i.-iii.) quite personal and full of allusions to his past experience with the church, the second (chs. iv.-v.) more distinctly hortatory and doctrinal.

Beginning with the usual epistolary greeting (i. 1) the writer (or writers to be more exact) express their thankfulness as they call to mind how the Thessalonians had received the Gospel and had continued loyal to it (i. 2-10). This leads to further recollection of the way the missionaries had come among them, teaching and setting them an example (ii. 1-12) and how the Thessalonians had responded (ii. 13-16). Becoming still more personal, Paul tells them how earnestly he had desired and



## I. Thessalonians

attempted to visit them again (ii. 17-20), how glad Timothy's message had made him (iii. 1-10), and closes this part of the letter with a prayer that he may be guided to see them again and that they may remain faithful (iii. 11-13). The more doctrinal part of the letter begins with an exhortation to live so as to please God, and especially to keep free from pagan immorality (iv. 1-8), and to manifest the spirit of brotherly love and forbearance (iv. 9-12). Next follow words of comfort addressed to those who had recently been bereaved, which leads to an extended statement of the doctrine of the Parousia (iv. 13-v. 11). This is followed by a series of brief practical exhortations covering various points of church order and Christian conduct (v. 12-22), closing, as at the end of the first part, with a fervent prayer (v. 23f). The Epistle closes with request for their prayers and with salutations, a solemn adjuration and a benediction (v. 25-28).

Much can be learned regarding Paul's experience in organizing and teaching the church at Thessalonica from the contents of his letters to this church, especially the first one. A special study of 1 Thess. for this purpose will be found very profitable.

No other of Paul's letters so fully reveals him as the *missionary*. His zeal and courage, his tact, his upright, consistent life and example, his intense, personal interest in those whom he was seeking to win and lead, his firm, uncompromising insistence on right conduct, his devotion to his Master and his God, his organizing ability—all these and other traits of the great Apostle show themselves unmistakably, though incidentally and unostentatiously, in this frank, warm-hearted letter. Of elaborated doctrine the Epistle contains little, except as to the Parousia, but as revealing what Paul accomplished by his missionary efforts in a Gentile community and how he transformed the life and conduct of his converts, this Epistle is of priceless value.

## 2. Commentary

### The Signature, Address, and Greeting (i. 1).

"Paul and Silvanus and Timothy." Paul doubtless dictated the letter (cf. note on v. 25), but it was from all three in a real,

not merely nominal, sense. (Cf. 2 Thess. i. 1; 1 Cor. i. 1; 2 Cor. i. 1; etc.) Silvanus, the same as the Silas of Acts xv. 22, etc. He was Paul's chosen companion on this journey (Acts xv. 40). Later he was associated with Peter (1 Pet. v. 12). Timothy, one of Paul's earlier converts (Acts xvi. 1-3), who became his most faithful and constant disciple and companion. The "church": the Greek word *ecclesia*, "called out," rendered "church," was commonly used for public assemblies (cf. Acts xix. 39). The use of this word by the early Christians well expressed their sense of having been "called out" from the rest of the world, and also their idea that they were not mere individuals but constituted an assembly, an organism, a body. Everywhere such organized bodies were now coming into existence in response to the Gospel call. "In God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ": in these words the fundamental character of the *ecclesia* of the Thessalonians, that which made it a Christian church, is indicated, i.e., belief in God as *Father*, in contrast to pagan conceptions (cf. i. 9) and in Jesus as *Christ* (i.e., Messiah) and *Lord* (cf. Acts ii. 36). This was the fundamental creedal position of the apostolic church. "Grace . . . and peace": the Greek form of salutation was "grace" in the sense of "joy." The Hebrew form was "peace." In Christianity the best of both Greek and Hebrew ideals were realized.

## I

## The Personal Section (i. 2-iii. 13).

1. Thanksgiving, as the writers recall how the Thessalonians had received the Gospel and continued to be loyal to it. i. 2-10.

2. "We give thanks": it was customary even among pagans to begin the contents of a letter with some expression of gratitude to deity. To Paul this was no mere form, but expressive of his deep, earnest solicitude for them. Timothy's report had given Paul great cause for gratitude (cf. iii. 6). "Our prayers": Paul and his companions were men of prayer. It was the unfailing source of strength, guidance and consolation.

Such passages as this show what a large place it held in their life. 3. Note the three supreme Christian graces, *faith*, *love* and *hope*. They find mention here in this *earliest* of Paul's extant letters as in much later ones (1 Cor. xiii. 13; Col. i. 4f). Each of these is an active, controlling element in a Christian's life. *Faith works*, *love labors* (the idea involves labor that costs) and *hope patiently endures*. The whole Christian life is here characterized. 4. "Your election": Paul knew this, not by marvelous insight into the secrets of Providence, but from *the fact of the effects* produced by his preaching in Thessalonica. This knowledge gives him great joy. 5. A suggestive picture of the power of Paul's preaching. Let the student analyze it carefully and note how much is implied in it. By "our Gospel" Paul means the Gospel given him of God (cf. Gal. i. 6, 11ff, etc.; also ii. 2). In the convictions and conversions resulting from his preaching Paul saw the work of the Spirit. No merely human power could produce such results. 6. "Of us, and of the Lord": Christ was of course the supreme example, even of suffering (cf. 1 Pet. ii. 21ff). Paul laid it upon his conscience to set his converts an example of Christ-conduct. The reference to sufferings seems to imply that the infant church was subject to persecution, not from the Roman authority, but from the city authorities or from the populace. To suffer "with joy" was one of the signs of the new power in Christianity. 7-8. The new church itself soon was infused with a missionary spirit. Thessalonica was strategically situated and from it the Gospel message was carried to neighboring places, while the good report spread even further. All this implies that considerable time had passed since the Apostle had first preached to them. 9. What they were once, what they had become,—how well they knew this. It was "a living and true God" whom now they had come to know and serve. 10. Now they have a hope (cf. ver. 3) which they once had not. On the subject of the Parousia see the notes on iv. 13ff. "Whom he raised from the dead": the resurrection was the great *fact* on which the apostolic message was based (cf. 1 Cor. xv. 12-19). It showed who and what Jesus was and is, and placed His life and death, and His person, in their true light. "Who delivereth us," etc.: here spoken of incidentally, implying that Paul

had fully instructed them on this matter in his preaching to them (cf. Gal. iii. 1).

2. Recollections of how they, the missionaries, had come to them and how the Thessalonians had received them. ii. 1-16.

This whole passage is remarkable for its frankness. With whole-hearted confidence, and in the assurance that between him and his converts there is nothing but mutual love, Paul recalls to their minds, doubtless for the sake of reimpressing it all upon them anew, just how he and his companions had labored among them. Perhaps nowhere else do we get so close a view of the real Paul with his great unselfish love and burning zeal. No wonder he made converts and held them. Let the student study the passage minutely for its many personal touches.

1. "Our entering in": As a missionary Paul was everywhere seeking to "enter" the domain of paganism with the Gospel. Everywhere a problem faced him, how to "enter" so that the effort would not be "in vain." 2. His experiences at Philippi had shown him what he might expect at other places. A "conflict" was before him, and he knew that he needed all the courage God might give him. 3-4. These verses reveal, at least in part, the secret of Paul's strength and success. (1) He spoke out of a profound conviction that his message was the truth, not a mistake or "error," not immoral or deceitful. (2) It was *God's* Gospel, entrusted to him by God. He must in every way be worthy of this trust, not merely in appearance, but really so before the all-seeing God. Paul's high sense of honor is evident here. 5-6. Paul would do nothing that might cast suspicion on his sincerity, lest the cause of the Gospel should suffer thereby. He even supported himself by daily toil, although he might rightly have asked support of the church in return for his apostolic labors (cf. ver. 9). 7-12. The rule Paul applied to himself he also laid down upon his converts,—*"to walk worthily of God."* His tender, anxious solicitude for them led him to give *himself* and not merely his message to them. 13. This verse is properly taken as a *positive assertion* that the "word" heard and received by the Thessalonians was God's word, not man's (omit the italicized words in R. V. to get the sense). As God's word it "worketh" in the souls of those who hear it (cf. Heb. iv. 12; Jas. i. 21; 1 Pet. i. 23). 14-16. The common

experience of persecution only tended to intensify the fellowship and sense of unity between the widely scattered Christian communities. Paul had only the kindest feelings toward the Christians of Judea. The statements in these verses read as though they were an epitome of the record in Acts viii. 1ff; ix. 1ff; xiii. 50; xiv. 4-6; xiv. 19ff; xvii. 5ff and xvii. 13; although, of course, they are perfectly independent. Jewish opposition to the Gospel, especially its proclamation to the Gentiles, Paul viewed as the culmination of a long history of opposition to God, destined to bring His wrath upon them.

3. His eagerness to see them again. ii. 17-20.

Paul's desire to see his converts again was very strong. Twice he had attempted it, but was hindered, possibly because of the danger from Jewish interference. Paul, like the early Christians generally, attributed such things to Satan as their ultimate cause. Paul looked for his reward in what he had accomplished in others. At the expected return of the Lord Jesus in His kingly glory, they, his converts, would constitute a "crown" of which he might boast (cf. Phil. iv. 1). They would be, as they then were, his "glory" and his "joy." Surely a pure and noble hope and ambition!

4. How Timothy's report had cheered him. iii. 1-10.

There is difficulty in harmonizing the statements here with those in Acts xvii. 15, 16 and xviii. 5. See the Introduction. 1. "We thought it good": The plural may mean Paul and Silas, or, as seems better, it may be used editorially for "I," in which case ver. 5 is simply a restatement of vers. 1 and 2. 2. It appears from this that the persecuting activity of the Jews in Thessalonica was persistent. 3f. Paul had not promised his converts that the Christian life would be free from difficulties and trials (cf. Acts xiv. 22), on the contrary, "hereunto we are appointed" (cf. Jesus' teaching, Mt. v. 10-12). 5. "The tempter" is ever at work, even the Lord Jesus had to meet him (cf. Mt. iv. 1ff) and Paul knew how great the danger was that his labor might have been in vain. He could not rest until he knew how they were. 6. Timothy's report, which prompted this letter, was such as to give Paul great joy. Their *faith*, and *love*, and "good remembrance of us," and "longing to see us" satisfied his solicitude, and encouraged him to renewed activity and hope

at Corinth (cf. Acts xviii. 5). 8. So closely did Paul identify himself with the spiritual life of his converts that if they failed it would have been as death to him. Note that it was not their *sufferings* or *trials* that worried Paul, but only whether their faith could endure. The old doctrine that suffering meant the divine displeasure was discarded by those who had learned Jesus' secret (cf. ver. 4). 10. The Thessalonians, though loyal, were still young and inexperienced in the faith. Paul is eager now, not only to see them again, but still further to strengthen and develop their faith. The beautiful and fervent prayer that follows (vers. 11-13) echoes this thought.

#### 5. Prayer. iii. 11-13.

11. Note that in the prayer both the Father and the Lord Jesus are addressed. Such was the place given Jesus in the Apostolic church. 12-13. Paul wished very much to see his converts again, and prayed that he might do so, but whether he saw them or not their spiritual condition was the all-important matter and this is the main burden of his prayer. Two great petitions the Apostle offered: first, that the supreme Christian virtue of *love* (cf. 1 Cor. xiii. 13) might be ever more abundantly manifest among them. No limits should be set to this. And, second, that *personal holiness* might be attained by each and all. Only thus can the great end be realized, fitness to meet the Lord at His coming.

## II

### The More Doctrinal Section (iv.-v.)

1. Exhortation—that they live so as to please God, and especially that they keep free from heathen immorality. iv. 1-8.

iv. 1-2. The expression "in the Lord Jesus" is significant. Jesus is Lord (cf. 1 Cor. xii. 3), the source of authority (cf. ver. 2), and so while Paul beseeches and exhorts, he does so with the authority of the Lord Jesus behind him. This authority bears directly on conduct, the way in which one *must* "walk." In this walk one should "abound," never thinking that he has at last reached the point where further progress is not

needed (cf. Rom. v. 15; xv. 13; 1 Cor. xv. 58; 2 Cor. i. 5; viii. 7; ix. 8; Phil. i. 9; also iii. 12 above). In ver. 2 we have one of the rare instances in his Epistles where Paul seems to make a direct use of Jesus' teachings. 3-8. Paul brought to his converts new and high—even the highest—ethical standards, and he insisted, in love, but firmly, that they live up to them. The lower ethics of paganism were difficult to overcome, but the new faith triumphed, through the spirit's work in the hearts of believers.

2. Exhortation—that they manifest the spirit of brotherly love and forbearance. iv. 9-12.

9. Once more (cf. iii. 12) Paul comes back to the great subject of "love of the brethren." This, as the distinctive mark of Christianity, was involved so fundamentally in the Christian teaching concerning God, that Paul felt that it was necessary only to remind them of this fact. The new doctrine of the divine fatherhood involved that of the brotherhood of man. 10. Once more, the appeal to "abound" in that which is good. 11-12. Homely advice, but how much depends on observing such simple rules of conduct!

3. Words of comfort for those who had recently been bereaved. iv. 13-v. 11.

In this section of the letter Paul deals with a question that evidently was troubling his converts. The return, or to use the Greek term, the *Parousia*, of the Lord Jesus, was one of the main elements in the faith of the early church; see the formulation in Acts iii. 20, 21. In the Gospels (Mt. xxiv., Mark xiii., Luke xxi., with many differences in details) we have what was believed to be Jesus' teaching on this subject. At first it was believed that Jesus would return very soon and when Paul became a Christian and learned from Peter and others (cf. Gal. i. 18; 1 Cor. xv. 1) the general contents of the Christian belief, this was accepted by him as a part of the faith he was to preach. Passages like ii. 19 and iii. 11 show that he had taught this belief to the Thessalonians. They seem to have understood him as teaching that the Lord's coming would take place within that generation, or, more definitely, that none of the believers would die before the *Parousia*. But in the meantime some of the church had died and the believing relatives

or friends were troubled, fearing that such would not share in the blessings of the Parousia. Consequently Paul now seeks to reassure them. The Gentile world was silent and sad in the presence of death. It knew no hope. Not so the Christian. The *fact* that Jesus died and rose again is the unshakable basis of confidence that those who are "fallen asleep through Jesus" are safe. Paul explains that those who die before the Parousia shall, when that takes place, rise and be the first to meet the Lord, and then "we that are alive" and "are left" shall meet Him.

Paul says that he states this "by the (or a) word of the Lord," not as merely his own opinion. It is not likely that he here claims to have had a special revelation on these matters. He stated what he had received as Jesus' teaching from those who had heard Him. It is essentially the same as the report of Jesus' teaching regarding the Parousia found in the Synoptic Gospels. The additional details not found in that tradition were easily derived from current beliefs concerning the last times, based partly on passages in the Old Testament, such as Joel ii. 1; Dan. xii. 1, 2, etc. In this passage the emphasis should be placed, not on such figurative details as "the voice of an archangel," the "trumpet," etc., but on the more essential truths that death does not separate the believer from his Lord and that ultimately they who are Christ's "shall ever be with the Lord." Herein was real comfort for the sorrowing. As years passed, Paul found his own hope resting more exclusively upon this all-inclusive ground of comfort (2 Cor. v. 1; Rom. xiv. 8; Phil. i. 23).

v. 1. Paul has just mentioned the Parousia as a source of great comfort. But this might lead to overcurious speculation as to when it would take place. He had already expressly told them that no one knew or could know when that day would come. (Cf. Jesus' words in Mt. xxiv. 36, 43f.) When no one is expecting it, it will be at hand. Consequently, their duty is always so to live that that day will not come upon them as an unpleasant surprise (ver. 4). 5. Light is frequently used in the New Testament as a symbol of righteousness, purity and truth (John i. 5; iii. 19-21; Mt. v. 16; Rom. viii. 12, etc.). With 8 cf. Eph vi. 13ff and the Old Testament basis in Is. lix. 17. 9. The divine purpose revealed in the Gospel is not pri-



marily wrath (although that is disclosed, cf. ii. 16, also Rom. i. 18), but a salvation (cf. John iii. 17) to be gained. While this salvation itself is of God "through our Lord Jesus Christ who died for us," yet to the "winning" of it our own watchful and soldier-like activity is necessary. *Faith, love and hope* (ver. 8, cf. i. 3) must all be actively present. 10. "Live together with him," an all-comprehensive expression. For the Christian, the two different states, the here and the hereafter, waking (i.e., living, in the ordinary temporal sense) and sleeping (i.e., death in the ordinary sense) are not of supreme significance. The difference is not fundamental. The greater fact that the Christian lives together with "Christ," is the all-important, all-comforting fact. 11. "Build each other up" ("edify one another"), i.e., in all that pertains to the development of Christian character. The duty, thus laid upon all members of the church, not upon the leaders only, Paul repeatedly emphasized (cf. Rom. xiv. 19; xv. 2; 1 Cor. viii. 1; x. 23; xiv. 3-5, 12, 17, 26).

#### 4. Practical advice. v. 12-22.

This section contains a series of practical exhortations, brief but comprehensive, covering the most important external phases of the Christian life. Such summaries as these are most instructive as revealing the nobility and beauty of Paul's conception of the Christian life. 12. He *exhorts rather* than commands. The *organization* of the church at Thessalonica is here implied, although we do not know its exact character (cf. 1 Tim. v. 17). 13f. The leaders of the church were to be not only heeded but *loved*. To carry out this recommendation the spirit of peace must rule. 14. All the church members were not perfect. Paul knew that some were disorderly, inclined to be insubordinate, others were "faint-hearted," needing much encouragement, others were "weak," especially in faith and ability to resist temptations, while "all" needed to exercise much mutual forbearance. 15-18. To do good not only to one another, but to *all men*, to rejoice, to pray, to give thanks,—such conduct the divine will requires. As having been revealed in Christ it has become for us a great, inspiring fact. Paul knew this from his own experience. 19-20. The best comment on these words will be found in 1 Cor. xii. and xiv. 21-22. The recommendation here concerns itself mainly with the manifestations of spiritual gifts referred

to in vers. 19, 20. But the rule is of general application. The Christian is to put all things to the test (cf. Mt. vii. 16ff; xii. 33-35) and scrupulously avoid every form of evil.

5. Prayer. v. 23-24.

Perfect holiness in every respect, blamelessness of spirit, body and soul, is the ideal, the goal of Christian attainment, the condition that shall receive the favorable judgment of the Parousia. But this can be obtained and retained only through the sanctifying and sustaining grace of God. God is the "God of peace" who seeks to reconcile man to Himself (cf. 2 Cor. v. 19) and Paul is sure that He can be trusted to bring about this blessed result.

Epistolary Conclusion. v. 25-28.

The concluding words of the Epistle were perhaps penned by the Apostle's own hand, all the rest being dictated (cf. 2 Thess. iii. 17; Gal. vi. 11-17; Col. iv. 18; 1 Cor. xvi. 21; Rom. xvi. 22). As he prays for them (cf. i. 2ff) so he beseeches them to pray for him and his fellow workers. The kiss was a form of salutation common among the Hebrews, and frequently referred to by Paul (cf. Rom. xvi. 16; 1 Cor. xvi. 20; 2 Cor. xiii. 12; 1 Pet. v. 14). It was the pure spirit of Christian love that made it "holy." The adjuration to see that the Epistle was read to all the brethren shows how important its contents were in Paul's opinion.

### Review-study of I. Thessalonians

Review the Introduction and try to gain a clear idea of the founding of the church of Thessalonica. Be able to state when, where, and under what circumstances 1 Thessalonians was written. Write out the outline of the letter in full so that its contents may be seen at a glance. Work out the following or similar topics:

1. A study of Paul's personality.
  - a. As a man. Make a statement based on 1 Thess. i. 2, 5; ii. 4-6, 9-10, 19; iii. 10; cf. 2 Thess. iii. 1, 2, 7.
  - b. As a preacher of the Gospel. What is implied in 1 Thess. i. 5; ii. 2-4, 13?

- c. As one entrusted with the care of souls. Study 1 Thess. i. 2; ii. 7-12, 19, 20; iii. 7-10; cf. 2 Thess. iii. 6-10.
- 2. A study of the character and life of an early Gentile Christian church. Study 1 Thess. i. 5, 8, 9; ii. 13, 14; iii. 6; iv. 9, 10; v. 12, 13, 19, 20, 26, 27; cf. 2 Thess. i. 4; ii. 15; iii. 11-12, 14.
- 3. Teachings or doctrines on which Paul laid great emphasis.
  - a. God, as living, true (1 Thess. i. 9), loving (cf. 2 Thess. ii. 16; iii. 5), righteous and holy (1 Thess. iv. 3-8; cf. 2 Thess. i. 5ff), the Father (1 Thess. i. 1-3, 9, 10; iii. 11-13; cf. 2 Thess. i. 1, 2; ii. 16), from whom is the Gospel and the Gospel call (1 Thess. ii. 4, 8, 13; v. 24).
  - b. Jesus as Lord and Christ (1 Thess. i. 1, 2, 3, 10, 19; iii. 11; iv. 1, 2, 14; v. 18, 28; cf. 2 Thess. i. 2, 7, 12; ii. 8, 16, 17; iii. 5, 6, 12, 18).

**THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS**



## I. CORINTHIANS

1 Corinthians belongs to the second group of Paul's Epistles, written toward the close of his Third Missionary Journey (52-56 A. D.). In Acts the account of this Journey is found in xviii. 23-xx. 3 (not including the return voyage to Jerusalem). Some additional details can be gathered from the four Epistles that belong to this group (1 Cor., 2 Cor., Gal. and Rom.).

### 1. Introduction

#### 1. The City of Corinth.

The first Greek city of Corinth was destroyed by the Romans in 146 B. C. For a hundred years the site was desolate. But in 46 B. C. the city was refounded by Julius Cæsar as a Roman colony, and rapidly grew in wealth and importance until, in the days of Paul, it had become the largest, wealthiest, and at the same time most wicked city of Greece.

Its site, at the western extremity of the isthmus, with a fine harbor on either side directly on the main line of maritime commerce between Asia Minor and Italy, enabled it to become one of the chief commercial cities of the Roman world.

In Paul's time Corinth was the capital of Southern Greece, i.e., the Roman Province of Achaia, and as such was the residence of the Roman proconsul (cf. Acts xviii. 12).

According to Ramsay the population was composed (1) of the descendants of the Roman "colonists"; (2) of resident "Romans," i.e., business men, officials, etc.; (3) of Greeks; (4) of resident strangers of different nationalities, such as Jews, etc. That Corinth contained many Jews is evident from the fact that they had a synagogue in the city (Acts xviii. 4ff).

Corinth, of course, had numerous pagan temples, the most celebrated of which, that of Aphrodite (Venus), had connected

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with it over a thousand prostitutes, indicative of the corrupt moral atmosphere of the city.

### 2. The founding of the Christian Church in Corinth.

As far as we know Corinth marked the limit of Paul's Second Missionary Journey. He went there from Athens, probably alone (Acts xviii. 1). He took up his abode with Aquila and Priscilla, Jews of Pontus, lately from Rome, and with them worked at his craft of tentmaking (Acts xviii. 2, 3). Probably he soon converted them to faith in Christ.

Though he made known at once his belief in Christ in the synagogue, it was not until he was rejoined by Silas and Timothy, with the latter's cheering news from Thessalonica (Acts xviii. 4ff, cf. 1 Thess. iii. 1ff) that Paul entered on his campaign with the definite purpose of organizing a Christian church in Corinth. The motives that actuated him he reveals in 1 Cor. ii. 1-5. The result of his vigorous preaching was a division in the synagogue. A few, among these the ruler Crispus, believed, but the majority remained unconvinced. Paul and his followers were compelled to withdraw from the synagogue. A "devout" Gentile, Titus (or Titus) Justus, offered them the use of his house and here the infant church was organized. Paul, who had been longing to get back to Thessalonica, was encouraged by the prospects and by a night vision to continue in Corinth. During the next eighteen months (fall of 50 to spring of 52 A. D.) he labored here with great success. Toward the close of this period the Jews attempted to have the Roman proconsul Gallio forbid the further proclamation of Christianity, but Gallio refused to interfere (Acts xviii. 6), a decision that prevented probably any further violent opposition to Christianity in the city.

### 3. The general character of the Church of Corinth.

The picture presented to us in 1 and 2 Cor. is that of a church with a large and exceedingly diversified membership. The majority were of "Greek," i.e., Gentile, rather than Jewish, descent. Some were, probably, wealthy and otherwise prominent (1 i. 26),\* but most of the members were of the humbler classes, many, perhaps, being slaves.

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\*In the notes on 1 Cor. the figures 1 or 2 before a chapter and verse reference indicate 1 Cor. or 2 Cor., respectively.

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The organization of this church was, apparently, very democratic. No one person is spoken of as its bishop or head. To such members as Stephanas and his household the church was urged to be subject (1 xvi. 16). It was the whole membership to which the Epistles were addressed, and it was this membership, meeting as a whole in solemn assembly, that decided questions of discipline (cf. 1 v. 4).

The lively, disputatious Greek spirit was much in evidence. Parties were easily formed (1 i. 12), though these may not have involved the whole membership. There were many different views on various points of Christian life and doctrine. The attitude to be taken toward their pagan friends, especially their more intimate ones, was a matter of debate. The social extremes represented in the church led to serious abuse of Christian fellowship at the Lord's Supper.

Yet, with all these and other conditions that seriously threatened the best development of Christian life, the church of Corinth was, on the whole, richly furnished in all spiritual gifts. While Paul found much to blame and correct, he also found much to praise. The very character of his appeals and rebukes shows that he was sure that in the end their fine sense of Christian honor and their highly developed Christian conscience would prevail. The free, pure spirit of Christianity surely won one of its greatest victories in this gay and pleasure-loving metropolis.

### 4. The correspondence between Paul and the Church of Corinth.

1 and 2 Cor. represent only a part of the correspondence between Paul and the Corinthian church. To study these Epistles profitably we must try to gain a clear view of the conditions that made all this correspondence necessary. We must first notice the developments that took place after Paul's long stay at the time of his first visit. When Paul left Corinth, in 52 A. D., he was accompanied as far as Ephesus by his friends, Aquila and Priscilla (Acts xviii. 18f). Not long after this Apollos, an Alexandrian Jew, recently converted to Christianity, came to Ephesus. Here he was further instructed in the new faith by Aquila and Priscilla. Thence he went with letters of commendation to the church of Corinth, where his eloquent defence of Christianity against the Jews brought him into great prominence



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(Acts xviii. 24-xix. 1). How long Apollos remained at Corinth we do not know. He was back in Ephesus and with Paul when 1 Cor. was written (1 xvi. 12). It was after his departure, probably, that the party-strife referred to in 1 i. 11f assumed serious proportions. (See notes on this passage.) In connection with the disputes thus engendered, there was some attempt to belittle Paul's apostolic authority and the debt of love and reverence due him from the church (cf. 1 ch. iv.). As the life and thought of the community grew more complex the differences of views on various phases of thought and life grew more pronounced. One case at least of flagrant immorality (1 v. 1ff) had occurred with no attempt at discipline on the part of the church.

While these developments were taking place in the Corinthian church Paul was engaged in his great work in Asia Minor with his headquarters at Ephesus (Acts xix. 1ff). Communication between Ephesus and Corinth by sea was comparatively easy. The year before the writing of 2 Cor. Paul had sent Titus to Corinth to make the preliminary arrangements for the collection. Titus found the church very willing to participate (2 viii. 6, 10f, 16ff; ix. 1ff). He may have informed Paul of the case of immorality, but apparently there was no serious opposition to Paul in the church. The result was that he wrote a letter, now lost, in which he warned them against keeping company with immoral persons (1 v. 9). What else this letter contained we do not know, but in any case Paul felt that the condition was serious enough to make it advisable to send Timothy to give such advice to the church as might seem necessary (1 xvi. 10f).

But before Timothy, who probably went by the longer route, *via* Macedonia, had had time to reach Corinth, a deputation from the church, consisting of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, arrived at Ephesus (1 xvi. 17f) bearing a letter from the church, in which the Apostle was asked to give his advice regarding a number of disputed points (1 vii. 1, etc.). From other parties, such as "those of Chloe" (1 i. 11) Paul learned of the disturbed condition of the church he had labored so long to establish. These were the circumstances that determined the writing of 1 Corinthians. It was sent, probably, by the hands of Stephanas and his friends on their return from Ephesus. From 1 xvi. 5-8 it may be inferred that it was written some time before Pente-

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cost of the year in which Paul closed his work at Ephesus, i.e., early in 55 A. D.

Meanwhile, the situation in Corinth had become more complicated. Timothy's mission had resulted disastrously. Whether through lack of tact, or insufficient force of character, he had been unable to quell the disputatious, factious spirit that was present in the church, and the authority both of himself and of the Apostle he represented was set at naught by the unruly element in the church. He returned to Paul, possibly leaving Corinth before the arrival of Stephanas with 1 Cor., with a very discouraging report. Paul was greatly disturbed, and what he did next is not perfectly clear. But the references in 2 xii. 14; xiii. 1ff show that previous to writing those words Paul had paid a *second* visit to Corinth and that his experience had not been altogether pleasant (cf. also 2 ii. 1; x. 1-10).

There are also indications of a letter, written in great distress of mind, but in the hope that it would produce a salutary effect (cf. 2 ii. 3f; vii. 8-12). It is probable that this letter was written at Ephesus just as Paul was about to close his work there, i.e., about May of 55 A. D. (cf. 1 xvi. 8). It has been conjectured, and, we think, rightly, that a large portion of this painful letter is preserved in 2 Cor. x.-xiii., which differ so decidedly in tone from the previous chapters i.-ix. In other words, 2 Cor. as we now have it is a composite epistle, made up of two separate letters, the earlier one (at least a fragment of it) having been appended to the later one, thus reversing the original order.

The bearer of the sorrowful letter was Titus. It was sent, apparently, just about as Paul was closing his three years' work in Ephesus, and planning to visit Corinth by way of Troas and Macedonia (2 ii. 12f). So anxious was Paul to learn the outcome of Titus' mission that he could not rest long at Troas, though the opportunity was inviting, but pressed on to meet Titus as soon as possible, i.e., in Macedonia. Here Titus returned to him and brought with him a most cheering and comforting report, more than satisfying Paul's most sanguine expectations. The church had come to its senses and its old loyalty and affection for its founder had returned (2 vii. 7f, 13ff). Perhaps because he did not wish to cut short his visit with his Macedonian churches, and also because of his desire that the contribution of the Corinthians

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to the great collection for the mother church at Jerusalem should be completely ready when he arrived at Corinth (2 viii. 1, 6-10, 18, 22f; ix. 1-5) he sent Titus back with a letter, this time one of a most joyful and confidential tone. In all probability we have this letter in 2 Cor. i.-ix. (cf. 2 i. 3-7; viii. 6, 16-24), which was written, therefore, about September or October, 55 A. D. We may well believe that with this letter preceding him, and with Titus, its bearer, already at Corinth awaiting him, Paul's reception by his now completely reconciled church was a most affectionate one. This his third visit was not a long one (cf. Acts xx. 2), but that it was peaceful and spiritually refreshing is evident from the fact that one of its fruits was the great Epistle to the Church at Rome, the most profound and complete of all his Epistles.

The following table gives a summary of the data regarding Paul's correspondence with the church of Corinth.

1. Conditions arise which disturbed the peace and good order of the Corinthian church,—between 52-54 A. D.
2. Paul, now at Ephesus, sends Titus to Corinth to ask the Corinthians to contribute to the collection he was planning for the poor brethren in Judea. About 54 A. D. (cf. 2 viii. 6, 10f, 16ff, ix. 1ff).
3. Through Titus and other sources Paul learns of conditions in Corinth.
4. Paul writes a letter, now lost, to the church dealing especially with the case of immorality (1 v. 9).
5. Paul sends Timothy on a mission directing him to visit Corinth and advise the church (1 xvi. 10f). Fall of 54.
6. A deputation from Corinth arrives in Ephesus with a letter from the church asking Paul's advice on certain matters (1 xvi. 17f; vii. 1). Paul also learns from other sources regarding the disturbed condition of the church.
7. Paul writes a long letter, our 1 Corinthians (really his second letter), to the church and probably sends it by the deputation on their return. Late in 54.
8. Meanwhile Timothy had reached Corinth and had failed to quiet matters. On his return he made a very discouraging report to Paul.
9. Paul makes a hasty visit to Corinth but fails to win over the disaffected ones (2 Cor. xii. 14; xiii. 1f).

10. Paul returns to Ephesus and writes a sorrowful letter which he entrusts to Titus. Early spring of 55. This letter (the third in order) is probably now extant as chapters x.-xiii. of 2 Corinthians (2 Cor. ii. 3f; vii. 8-12).
  11. Paul leaves Ephesus, soon after Pentecost (June) of 55, to visit Macedonia.
  12. In Macedonia Titus rejoins him, bringing a very cheering report regarding matters in Corinth.
  13. Paul, greatly comforted, writes a letter (the fourth in order), sending it to Corinth by Titus, while he remains a while longer in Macedonia. Summer of 55. Here, probably, Galatians is written.
  14. Finally, in the fall of 55, Paul arrives once more in Corinth where he remains three months. Writes Romans.
5. General Outline of 1 Corinthians.

This long Epistle, after the usual epistolary introduction i. 1-9, can be subdivided into six main sections, as follows: I. Concerning the divisions in the church at Corinth, i. 10-iv. 21. II. Concerning the offences against Christian morals of which Paul had heard that some are guilty, v. 1-vi. 20. III. Reply to certain questions which had been put to Paul by the church at Corinth, vii. 1-xi. 1. IV. Criticism and advice regarding their conduct in the public services of the church, xi. 2-xiv. 40. V. Defence and explanation of the doctrine of the Resurrection, xv. 1-58. VI. Information and notices, xvi. 1-18. Epistolary conclusion, greetings and benediction, xvi. 19-24.

## 2. Commentary

i. 1-3. The signature, address, and salutation. As we see from xvi. 21, Paul dictated this letter adding only the final salutation with his own hand (see also notes on 1 Thess. i. 1). 1. Paul emphasizes his apostleship, perhaps because some were inclined to call it in question (cf. ix. 1), as he did later when he wrote to the Galatians (cf. Gal. i. 1ff). Sosthenes, whom Paul here associates with himself, was evidently well known to the Corinthians. He may have been formerly the ruler of the Jewish synagogue in Corinth (Acts xviii. 17). 2. On the term "church" see note on 1 Thess. i. 1. Paul speaks of this church from the

ideal point of view. As such, the members are "sanctified," called saints. Holiness is the standard of the Christian life. To this the believer is "called," and this divine call is both mediated by and its holy ideal revealed "in Christ Jesus." 3. The Salutation. See note on 1 Thess. i. 1. 4-9. The customary epistolary thanksgiving. See note on 1 Thess. i. 2. Paul finds reason for thanksgiving as he thinks of the past, the present, and the future of the church of Corinth. Comprehensively he mentions the *grace* of God, i.e., the manifestation of God's spirit in the lives of the Corinthians as the reason for his thanksgiving. This grace was given "in Christ Jesus," the phrase so frequent and so full of meaning in Paul's Epistles. 5-6. When Paul came to them and preached Christ, the grace of God was so manifest that both in "utterance" and in "knowledge," i.e., understanding of Christian truth, the Corinthian believers were remarkable. Paul mentions here just the gifts which also exposed the Corinthians most insidiously to the temptation to pride and conceit. Cf. the commendation in 1 Thess. i. 2ff. Paul's preaching was a "testimony" regarding Christ. The results showed how it was "confirmed," i.e., the conversions and the new spiritual life were proof of the truth of the Apostle's message. 7. So it had continued up to the time when the Apostle wrote; they had no reason to feel that they had "come behind" in any "gift" or *charisma*. Later, Paul speaks more in detail of the various gifts or *charismata* in evidence in this church (chs. xii.-xiv.). As elsewhere throughout the apostolic church there was an eager expectancy of the speedy return of the Lord Jesus. This was one of the fundamental elements in the faith of believers. Cf. 1 Thess. iv. 13-v. 11; 2 Thess. ii. 1-12. 8. When that time or "day" comes, it will be a day of judgment, and then the Christian believer will be cleared as "unreprovable," i.e., freed from condemnation through his sincere faith in Christ. 9. Such is God's word and He is faithful. The divine promise can be trusted, especially when one considers the great reality involved in the Gospel call, to a "fellowship" (*communion* or *partnership*) with His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. This is a solid ground on which to rest one's hope. The very general character of this thanksgiving was in itself a delicate hint on Paul's part to the church that in detail there were many things that needed correction.

## I

## The Party-strife in the Church at Corinth (i. 10-iv. 21).

The Apostle now takes up the first of the main subjects with which his letter deals, i.e., the divisions in the church. 10-12. In these verses the Apostle *introduces* the subject (1) by an exhortation to unity, ver. 10; (2) by stating the source of his information, ver. 11; and (3) by indicating what he had heard, ver. 12.

Paul very significantly beseeches them "through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" as the one name and authority which unifies all genuine Christian profession. To "speak the same thing" of course has reference to fundamental statements, not to a merely superficial unity. Minor differences were unavoidable, but as to the fundamentals of the faith "the same mind," "the same judgment" should unite all members of the church. Paul was no lover of strife. Who "Chloe" was and where she lived is not known. Possibly her home was in Ephesus and it was through certain members of her household who had visited Corinth that Paul received the news of the divisions at Corinth. It is not necessary to suppose that the *whole* membership of the church at Corinth was formally divided into just the four parties mentioned in ver. 12. The names Paul, Apollos, Cephas, Christ, were evidently used by the respective partizans as indicating the *authority* they considered final in matters of Christian belief. As the founder of the church, of course Paul was considered a final authority by many. Apollos had also won great fame and possibly converted many in Corinth. There may have been others who, converted elsewhere under Peter (Cephas) or in circles where his influence was dominant, had asserted in Corinth that Peter was more than Paul. Still others, possibly under pretence of a more profound knowledge of Christ, may have belittled all human authorities saying they were "of Christ."

In dealing with this situation Paul sought first and mainly to show that all such party-strife was due to an exaggerated estimate of "wisdom," leading to false confidence in themselves as "wise" instead of trust in the wisdom of God revealed in Christ. His argument is quite detailed and we shall therefore try to indicate its various steps.

1. The church of Corinth was founded by the preaching of the Gospel (of Christ), not in the name of Paul (or any other man) or in mere human wisdom (13-17). 13. In these three questions Paul strikes at the very heart of the matter. Christ is the foundation of the church, if He were "divided" there could be no church. But it was *Christ crucified* whom Paul preached. By making *Paul* a party watchword the all-importance of "Christ crucified" was lost sight of. The same was true in view of the fact that Christian baptism was in the name of Christ alone. 14-16. Paul remembers how few he had baptized personally. He is glad now of the fact for it is evidence of how little emphasis he placed on himself. 17. Paul always did emphasize, however, one thing: he was *sent*—i.e., an Apostle—by Christ, and as such his great business was "to preach the Gospel," literally to *evangelize*. His message was *given* him, not reasoned out by him; hence, as Paul conceived it, his message was not human "wisdom of words," but objectively centered about the cross.

2. In the next place, the Apostle seeks to show that the only wisdom the Christian should boast of is the wisdom of the message of the Cross. This, however, excludes boasting in human wisdom. So he himself felt and acted when he first preached to them (i. 18-ii. 5). 18. The "word of the Cross" was this message. In this letter Paul does not explain the content of this "word of the Cross." He had done this many times in his preaching among them and his readers knew very well what he meant. Here he is seeking to show the significance of this fact in view of the conditions in Corinth. If by some the "word of the Cross" was counted "foolishness" this was evidence to Paul that such were "perishing." See 1 Thess. i. 4 and the note thereon, as to a similar deduction from evidence. On the other hand, there were those to whom this same "word of the Cross" was a "power of God" and this was evidence that they were "being saved." These were great *facts of experience* known to his readers and Paul wished them to realize their significance. 19. Quoted from Is. xxix. 14, not as a prediction of just what had happened in Corinth, but as an authoritative statement of a principle, true in Old Testament time and even more so in the New Dispensation. 20-25. Throughout Paul had in mind the party-strife as due to an overconfidence in human wisdom as though

this were sufficient to meet the religious needs of man. Practically all in that world with which Paul had to deal were either Jews or "Greeks," i.e., pagans. The former prided themselves on being already in possession of a divinely given religion, and "stumbled" at the "word of the Cross"; the latter were accustomed to many theories and views of philosophers and others, and, viewing religion as something intellectual rather than as a moral and spiritual experience, found no place for this same message of the Cross in their philosophy. But the *fact* was that in Corinth the Cross had been preached, men, both Jews and Greeks, had believed, and *in believing* had found in Christ the *power* and *wisdom*, not of man, but of *God*. What an all-significant fact! In vers. 22-24 the two great classes, Jews and Greeks, are again characterized. The former sought "signs," demanding external miraculous proof of the truth of the Gospel. Cf. the record in the Gospel of Jesus being challenged in this way. The Greek sought "wisdom." To both the Apostle offered a *crucified Messiah*, through whom the power (as more than satisfying the demand for a sign) and the wisdom (more than sufficient for the Greek) of *God* was made known in the experience of the "called."

26-31. Appeal to their own experience as justifying what he has just said. Evidently the church at Corinth was composed largely of people of lower social strata. Paul would have them remind themselves of what their faith in the Gospel, simply as the message of the Cross and not as human wisdom, had done for them. Lowly people as most of them were, in Christ they had found themselves in possession of something *from God*. This Paul describes in four terms (ver. 30): wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Wisdom, in the sense of a new knowledge of God, e.g., as Father, and of His spirituality, His goodness, His love, etc. Righteousness, in the new revelation of the moral demand of God, and of the justification of sinners through the great reconciliation wrought out on the Cross. Sanctification, in the new sense of holiness. Redemption, in the actual experience of salvation as a present fact and as a more glorious future realization. If all this is but appreciated by the Christian, he will "glory" only "in the Lord," not in his own wisdom.



ii. 1-5. Paul reinforces what he has just said by recalling to his readers' memory his own manner and spirit when he first preached among them and led them into their new Christian experience. 1. If any one might have had reason to rely on wisdom and eloquence, that one was Paul, for he had both. As a preacher of the Gospel he would not depend on such things. Not only were his hearers generally simple people, but above all his own sense of the all-importance of his message as centering in the *fact* of Christ crucified prevented him from making any display of his own wisdom. What Paul felt that he had to announce or "proclaim" was the "testimony" (not "mystery") of *God*, not of any man. 2. This testimony was embodied in the one great fact—which also declared a truth—*Jesus, the Messiah* and, as such, *crucified*. This alone was Paul's message, in it all else was contained. 3. The reason for Paul's feeling of weakness when he came to Corinth may have been a constantly present one, an overwhelming sense of the greatness of his message and of the insufficiency of all human ability to present it adequately. His recent experience with the Athenian philosophers (cf. Acts xvii. 16ff) and his anxiety about the Thessalonians (cf. 1 Thess. iii. 1ff) may have intensified this feeling. 4. How different was the Apostle's confidence in his own wisdom from that of some of his converts or members of the church in Corinth. The "demonstration of the Spirit and of power" was not miracle-working, but the Spirit's work in the heart producing conversion and bearing fruit in the new moral and religious life of the believers (cf. 1 Thess. i. 5). 5. Thus, and thus alone, their faith rested on an unshakable foundation.

3. There is, however, a wisdom that belongs to Christianity (ii. 6-iii. 9). This wisdom Paul speaks among the "perfect," or "mature," not a world-wisdom, but a spiritual wisdom (ii. 6-16). To the Corinthians he has not as yet made known this higher wisdom, since they are too immature to receive it, as is evident from their dissensions (iii. 1-9).

ii. 6. Paul would not allow his readers to think that he really considered the Gospel to be foolishness. It contains, in fact, a wisdom of the highest sort, only not a wisdom after the ordinary standards of the world. 7. An affirmative description of this higher wisdom. It is "of God," hence not of man's inven-

tion. Secondly, it has been "hidden" in a "mystery"; that is, this wisdom contains truths that have existed always, but have been waiting to be disclosed. In the Gospel these truths are disclosed, though they may not be equally apparent to all. Paul means that the plan of salvation was in God's purpose from eternity. 8. In one expression, "the rulers of this world," Paul brings together all those who had a part in condemning Jesus. Whether Pilate or Caiaphas, Jew or Gentile, they were alike in being blind to the divine character and glory of Him they crucified (cf. Lk. xxiii. 34; Acts iii. 17; xiii. 27). 9. Apparently a free combination, perhaps from memory, of Is. lxiv. 4; lxv. 16, 17. 10. By "us" Paul means all whose hearts are illumined by the Divine Spirit to know Christ. The degree of such illumination differs, of course. Paul's own experience had been very full and fruitful. 11. God alone knows Himself, and His purposes and ways. And only God's Spirit can make Him and His mind known to man. 12. We may be sure that Paul is here unfolding his own experience. The "things freely given to us by God" are the sum-total of the revelation in Christ, God's great gift. These had remained unknown to Paul until his great experience on the way to Damascus (cf. Gal. i. 15f) and subsequent spiritual experiences had taught him the great truths revealed in Christ. 13. It was what was *taught him by the Spirit* that he sought to teach others, hence his positive assertion that it was no human philosophy that he was preaching. The latter part of the verse may be variously rendered, but it makes one thing clear: that Paul meant to keep the truth of Christianity clear of all mixture with human philosophies. 14. By "natural" Paul means unregenerated, untouched by the new life imparted by the Holy Spirit. For "judged" it would be well to substitute "examined." The "natural" man cannot properly inquire into the things of the Spirit, as he lacks the spiritual faculty. 15-16. The statement of a great privilege, but involving also the great danger of spiritual pride. The "spiritual" man, by virtue of his endowment with the Spirit, is able to test "all things," i.e., principles of conduct, ideals, etc., and know their worth. But the "natural" man cannot thus judge a "spiritual" man. Through Christ this knowledge is mediated. He who knows Christ knows God.

iii. 1-9. If faith in Christ implies or involves such wonderful

wisdom, why then, the Corinthians might ask, had not Paul unfolded all this spiritual wisdom to them long before? The reason is simple and in giving it the Apostle again gently rebukes the party-strife as evidence of an imperfect view of the Gospel.

1, 2. The time referred to here is, of course, when Paul first preached in Corinth. Then only the simplest statements of the truth could be given them. The word "carnal" (lit. *fleshly*) has much the same sense as "natural" in ii. 14. It expresses the absence of the spiritual element. Paul found them unspiritual and had to deal with them as such, as mere "babes," but babes "in Christ" after they believed his message. 3, 4. Their party-strife, Paul tells them plainly, did not grow out of a deeper spiritual knowledge of Christ, but was purely human, "after the manner of men." 5-9. The emphasis throughout is on *God*. Individuals, such as Paul and Apollos, are nothing but servants. God it is who gives each his measure of success and so really all the laborers are but one. So also with the field of labor (the Corinthians themselves); it is God's, and the result is God's. Thus effectually all reason for strife and jealousy is disposed of.

4. There was another aspect to the matter. The labor of all leaders, as Paul, Apollos, and others, was like building on a foundation. On the same foundation, Christ, different superstructures may be reared, but only such as stand the test will be worthy of reward (iii. 10-15).

10, 11. While Paul likens himself to a wise master-builder, true to the idea of the preceding verses, he is such only "according to the grace of God given" to him. As the first who preached Christ in Corinth, he had laid the one only possible foundation, Jesus Christ. All who followed him, as Apollos and others, necessarily built on this foundation. True then, it remains true today, there is but one foundation. 12. In a figurative way Paul refers to the great variety of views and practices set forth in the church of Corinth (and elsewhere) as belonging to Christianity. Some were good, others worthless. 13. The main reference is to the Day of the Lord (cf. 1 Thess. v. 4; 2 Thess. ii. 2), when at the return of Christ all human beings and their work shall be judged. The "fire" is the expressive figure for the severity of the *test*. What cannot stand the test will thereby suffer destruction. The truth that there is a *testing process* to which all views of life

and all varieties of nominally Christian conduct are subject is suggested, though not explicitly taught. All tests do not wait for the Judgment Day. 14, 15. Paul is not considering views that are *fundamentally* false. He is thinking only of cases where the worker is a Christian. The reward is great when superstructure and foundation, the fundamental faith and all the superstructure of profession and conduct, agree. It is otherwise, when only the foundation is found able to stand the test. The phrase, "as through fire," means "barely"—a narrow escape.

5. Another reason why all vain boasting, strife, etc., should be avoided is that a body of Christians is a temple of God, to corrupt or injure which is serious sin (iii. 16-23). 16, 17. The ordinary pagan temple, with which Paul's readers were all very familiar, had an innermost chamber or *shrine*, where the deity was thought to have his abode or manifest himself. This chamber was accessible only to a few and was most sacred. Such was the Holy of Holies in the Temple at Jerusalem. Paul makes use of these familiar ideas when he calls the Christian community the *shrine* of God, inhabited by the Holy Spirit, in virtue of His presence with the individual members. Anything that militates against the supremacy of the Spirit in the Christian community tends to "destroy" it as the "temple of God." Just such was the spirit of strife with its confidence and boast in a purely human wisdom. 18-20. With these words Paul comes back to the thought of i. 17ff, i.e., to the fundamental cause of the troubles in the church, the overconfidence in their new wisdom. In ver. 18 he is very earnest: "Let no one deceive himself." To be truly wise, one must first become a fool. He cannot hold his own wisdom and at the same time accept the wisdom of God revealed in the Gospel. Two Old Testament quotations very aptly illustrate and enforce the Apostle's thought (Job v. 14; Ps. xciv. 11). 21-23. Cf. i. 30, 31. All things are yours, even your teachers (hence do not boast in them), *but* ye are Christ's (not your own masters, not independent of control) and Christ is God's (God is Father, Christ is the obedient Son, etc.). Rightly understood, this truth should prove the corrective of all vainglorious strife and foolish dependence on mere human wisdom.

6. Thus far Paul has argued mainly along purely impersonal lines, laying down general principles applicable to the conditions

in Corinth. His argument now takes a more personal turn and he concludes his discussion of the party-strife in the Corinthian church by a statement of the principles underlying his own personal relations to it (iv. 1-21). He first declares plainly that he holds himself answerable to God alone whose "steward" he is (vers. 1-5); then, with a slight tinge of irony, he points out how little he or Apollos have received in the way of external rewards or comforts, though they, the Corinthians, owe all to them and profit by their sacrifices and sufferings (vers. 6-13); then in a more tender tone he speaks as their spiritual father and tells them of Timothy's mission and his own plan to visit them soon (vers. 14-21).

1. If Paul is to be judged by any man he insists that his real place or status be clearly recognized. This he defines in two words: he is a "minister," i.e., a mere servant, of *Christ* (not of man), and a "steward," i.e., dispenser, of the mysteries, i.e., the truths revealed in the Gospel, of God. 2. The "faithful" steward is the one who is faithful to his trust and to the one whose steward he is. 3. Here the logical consequence of vers. 1 and 2 is stated. Paul speaks very plainly. He is not accountable to them, and their estimate of him is really a very small matter. It is as though the Corinthians were bringing Paul to trial. He tells them that he cares little for the *examination* (cf. ii. 14) of any human tribunal. Instead of "man's judgment" (lit. *human day*, with implied reference to Christ's *day of judgment*, cf. iii. 13), he is careful only of his Master's. 4. Completes the thought of the latter part of ver. 3. So far as he knows himself there is no reason why he should be adversely judged, but he does not rest his confidence on this self-judgment. Not thus has he been justified. His *examination* and justification must come solely from his Master. 5. The early church supposed the return of Christ to be near at hand. In attempting to judge (here in the sense of passing a final sentence) of Paul's conduct and work they were acting *out of season* ("before the time"). The "hidden things of darkness" and "the counsels of the hearts" correspond. Who knows what may be in his heart? The searching judgment of God will bring everything to light. The praise, Paul is sure that there will be praise, that shall then be given, will be in accordance with the truth.

6. Paul expressly referred only to himself and Apollos in his argument, but the principles set forth were to apply to all parties concerned. This made the application only the more telling. The words "not beyond the things which are written" would be printed between quotation marks in a modern book. They were probably a familiar proverbial maxim indicating that in the Scripture (the Old Testament) the safe limits for thought and conduct were to be found. Paul has thus far supported his argument by several Old Testament quotations. 7. All that the Corinthians had, they *had received* from Paul, Apollos, and such leaders. This fact should have prevented them from being "puffed up," especially as Paul and Apollos were not rivals but the best of friends. 8-13. Throughout the Apostle indulges in playful irony, underneath which there is a serious rebuke. What he says about the lot of the Apostles, viewed externally, was all too true. Suffering, self-sacrifice, privations, trials, daily toil, dishonor and disgrace,—such seemed to be their fate. The strongest statement is in ver. 9 where the imagery is that of the arena where the criminals condemned to death were the "spectacle" by which the mocking, jeering crowd were entertained. Only, conscious of the world-issue involved, Paul says that the scene is witnessed by "the world, even angels and men." On the other hand, when he tells them that already they are "filled" or *sated*, are "rich" and "reign," are "wise," "strong," "have glory," he is really exposing the superficiality and emptiness of their foolish boasting. They had received their Christianity through the self-denying, loving service of such men as Paul. Why should they now boast as though they were in some way superior to those to whom they owed all they had?

14. What Paul had just written was well calculated to make the readers, especially the more guilty ones, ashamed of their conduct. But the ruling motive in Paul was love, and for his converts he had a deep affection. In spite of the irony, he would have them realize that he had given fatherly admonition. 15. For "tutors" we might read more literally *pedagogues*. The ancient pedagogue was generally a slave who was entrusted with the care of a child, but not usually his teacher (cf. note on Gal. iii. 24f). Paul wishes the Corinthians to remember that while there were others who aspired to lead or influence them, he alone

was entitled to be honored and loved as their spiritual father in Christ. Through him, i.e., through the Gospel he preached to them, they had been brought to their new life in Christ. 16. "Imitators," i.e., in character and disposition, not in the way of partizanship. See note on 1 Thess. i. 6. 17. Timothy had already left Paul but was going by a roundabout way, and was not likely to reach them for some time (cf. xvi. 10). This letter might get to them first, and, if so, here they would find an explanation of Timothy's mission. The affection of Paul for Timothy reveals itself in the way he speaks of him. Paul's "ways which are in Christ Jesus" and how he teaches "everywhere in every church" will be freshly brought to their mind by Timothy. Paul's long absence from Corinth had led some to forget just how he had acted and taught. Timothy would enable them to remember more exactly, and would show them that Paul was perfectly consistent. He expected of the Corinthians the same results as he looked for in all his Gentile churches. 18-19. Evidently some in the Corinthian church were conceited and defiant, perhaps asserting that Paul would not dare to come back and assert his apostolic authority. But it takes more than words to establish real spiritual authority. By "power" Paul evidently means the moral and spiritual effects produced by the action of the Holy Spirit. Paul was sure he could depend on this ultimately (cf. 1 Thess. i. 5). On the proposed visit see xvi. 5ff. 20. The Kingdom is the *rule* of God and *power* to rule is necessarily implied. This divine power manifests itself in the varied work of the Spirit. Compare Rom. xiv. 17. 21. Their action will determine his. He would prefer to come to them in love, in meekness, with no desire to summarily assert his authority. Some might think such conduct evidence of weakness and despise it. If so, he would have to use the "rod." Playful irony, with a serious undertone.

### Review-study of 1 Cor. i-iv.

1. On the introduction. With what other letters of Paul does 1 Cor. belong as forming one group? Where and what sort of a city was Corinth? State briefly the circumstances of the founding of the church of Corinth. What was the general character of

this church? When and where was 1 Cor. written? What circumstances led to its being written? What reasons are there for thinking that some of Paul's correspondence with the church of Corinth has been lost? Give a brief general outline of 1 Cor.

2. On the commentary. Give a detailed outline of chs. i.-iv., especially of the Apostle's discussion of the party-strife in the church. What does Paul place *first* in introducing this discussion? What place did Paul give the Cross (the experience of Christ on the Cross and its meaning) in his message of Christianity (i. 18-25)? How much is brought to the Christian in his experience of Christ (i. 30)? Should this prove true today? What personal traits of Paul do you observe in chs. ii.-iv. as worthy of imitation?

## II

Concerning certain offences against Christian morals of which, he hears, some in the Church are guilty (v.-vi.).

1. The case of incest (v. 1-13).

1. The words "it is actually reported" indicate the case was well known, even notorious. The term rendered "fornication" covers a number of forms of sexual immorality. In this case it might well be rendered *incest*. A certain member of the church had taken as his wife his stepmother. His father was, presumably, dead, and the woman was not a member of the church. It only made it the more shameful that this was something condemned even by pagan opinion, usually far below the Christian standard. 2. The attitude of the church amazed Paul. This shows how unusual it was for such a thing to happen in his churches. In this case those in control took a defiant attitude; instead of grieving over the sin, they were "puffed up," possibly defending it on a false theory of Christian liberty, and doing nothing with the offender. 3. Paul realizes the situation so keenly that he feels that he is *spiritually* present with them and *as thus present* he has judged the case. 4, 5. A formal act of most serious import by the whole church is here indicated. The deliverance of the offender to Satan was to be "in the name of our



Lord Jesus." In addition to Paul, present in spirit, and the church, a third Presence would be manifest in such an assembly,—"the power of our Lord Jesus" (cf. Mt. xviii. 18-20; Acts v. 1-11; xiii. 9f). The idea was that such a formal "deliverance to Satan" would result in some physical affliction—possibly even death, which, however, would likewise involve the saving of the soul. Doubtless, in case the offender repented promptly, it was believed that the threatened visitation would be averted.

6-8. Further reasons why the church should purify itself of this evil. In the first place there was the danger that the corruption would spread like leaven. "Old leaven," "new lump": terms taken from the Jewish passover practices (cf. Ex. xii. 18f). The "new lump" or *kneading* at the Passover season was unleavened. As leaven was often used as a symbol of moral corruption, it was easy and natural for Paul to use this figurative language. He completes the application by reminding them that Christ *their* Paschal Lamb has been slain. As *Christians*, then, they must *always* keep the (moral) Passover free from the old leaven of sin, with the "unleavened bread" of sincerity and truth. The passage does not imply that the Gentile Christians regularly observed the Jewish Passover. 9-10. Some earlier written message of Paul to the Corinthians is here referred to. It probably related to the case mentioned in ver. 1, but had not been clearly understood. He had advised them, in general, not to associate with fornicators, but, he now explains, he did not mean this in the most all-inclusive sense. Such persons abounded in the unconverted Gentile world of which they were a part. Some degree of contact was unavoidable. 11. He now reiterates and adds to his earlier advice. "If any that is named a brother," i.e., professing Christian, is guilty of the sins he specifies, with such an one they are "not to eat," i.e., to have nothing to do with him. Expulsion from the church is, of course, implied. 12, 13. The first sentence may echo one way in which his advice had been misunderstood. The church cannot pronounce sentence on "those without" its membership. But "those within" it should judge, but only in a most serious spirit (cf. 2 Thess. iii. 14f). The closing sentence—a quotation from Dt. xvii. 7—concludes, as with a word of divine authority, the discussion of this unpleasant matter.

2. Concerning lawsuits of believers in heathen courts (vi. 1-11).

1. Again the language betrays the deep feeling of the Apostle. For a Christian to bring suit against a *fellow-Christian* was a *daring* thing to do, since it involved so much that was directly opposed to the spirit of Christianity. "Neighbor" here means *fellow-Christian* (lit. the other one of the same class). In speaking of the heathen judges as "unrighteous," Paul means *non-Christian* and therefore with no knowledge of the righteousness revealed in the Gospel. His tone is slightly ironical. 2. The ideas here expressed belonged to the current conceptions of the Messianic Kingdom, largely based on Dan. vii. 22 (cf. Mt. xix. 28). The triumph of God's Kingdom involves judgment on the world. Paul argues from the greater to the less. If the "saints" (i.e., believers) are worthy of and destined for such great things, can they not settle their own disputes? 4. The idea is: if you desire to have tribunals to deal with matters of common life, set on the bench as your judges those of you who are despised, if there are any such. The language is ironical. 5. The preferable and more Christian method is indicated. With feigned surprise the Apostle asks if they have no one who is wise enough for such a service (they were boasting of their "wisdom"). 6. The Apostle comes back to the fact: they do not arbitrate their disputes among themselves, but go to law, even before unbelieving heathen judges. Paul does not say that such courts would not render just judgments. It was the fact itself—Christians in litigation—that was so troublesome to him. 7. There was a "defect" (better, a *loss*) evident in such proceedings. It was a *loss*, in that whichever party won the suit both parties lost more in their failure to act according to the Christian ideal. The alternative Paul propounds is that recommended by Jesus (Mt. v. 38ff; Lk. vi. 27ff). 8. The suits themselves are evidence of the wrong-doing and of the unbrotherly spirit. "Brothers" stands for the ideal. How far below it was such conduct! 9f. Confessedly, as evidenced by the suits, some of them were *unjust*. Let them think what this involves, a plain truth about which they should not deceive themselves; wrong-doers do not inherit the Kingdom of God. The list of characteristic classes of heathen sinners shows what early Christianity had to contend with. 11. Guilty of such things some of them had been, but that was *past*. *Now*, through *faith*, in the

name of the Lord Jesus Christ, they had become partakers of the redemptive process, "washed," "sanctified," "justified" in (or by) the Holy Spirit; let them live accordingly.

3. The false idea of Christian liberty involved in the wrong practices just discussed (vi. 12-20).

12. Two limitations to the use of Christian liberty are here formulated. Probably Paul himself had formulated the maxim, "all things are lawful for me," i.e., *vs.* the old bondage to the Jewish law. He now sees that he must limit the application of the maxim; (1) by the consideration of *expediency*. All things do not profit, in some there is no benefit; (2) by noting that abuse of liberty, i.e., licence, results in slavery. 13. Perhaps Paul had used the maxim first in reference to meats, asserting his Christian liberty to eat any kind of food. Foods concern the stomach and both are perishable. No moral issue is here involved. Otherwise it is with the bodily sin of fornication. Here the body as a whole, in its higher relationships, is involved. 14-20 develop this idea in detail.

### III

Reply to certain questions which had been sent to him in writing by the Church (vii. 1-xi. 1).

That these questions formed part, at least, of the contents of a letter from the church to Paul is evident from vii. 1. Perhaps Stephanas (xvi. 15-18) was its bearer. The questions seem to have related mainly to two subjects: marriage and meats offered to idols. Each subject was a complicated one involving a number of perplexing side-issues.

1. Regarding various aspects to the subject of marriage (vii. 1-40).

(1) As between marriage and celibacy, under the circumstances, the Apostle advises marriage (1-9). 1. Personally, Paul's sentiments were in favor of celibacy. The word rendered "good" means here *fitting, honorable, worthy*. 2. The prevalent laxity of morals made celibacy practically impossible, except for the very few. The kind of marriage Paul urges here is the

strictest monogamy,—the Christian ideal *vs.* both pagan license and Jewish polygamy. 3, 4. In such a marriage each party has his (her) “due,” and each must render to the other this “due.” A perfect union, with its mutual concessions and forbearances, is implied. 5. “Defraud not,” i.e., of the “due” mentioned in ver. 3f. 6. Paul is well aware that Jesus gave no detailed instructions on such matters and guards his advice carefully. 7. Paul evidently was unmarried at this time. It is idle to speculate whether he had never married or was a widower. For him this condition involved no danger, but this was his “gift” from God; others might not have such a gift. 8, 9. A summary re-statement. Widows are mentioned along with unmarried (men) because they had control of themselves, younger unmarried women would be usually under the control of parents or guardians.

(2) The Apostle takes up next the subject of divorce (10-16) adding, by way of a digression, a brief warning against the general temptation to change their circumstances (17-24). Divorce was frightfully common in the ancient world. Even among the Jews the husband could divorce his wife on the most trifling pretexts. Jesus taught that divorce was wrong (Mk. x. 11f). 10, 11. First, Paul speaks of cases where both parties are Christian. Here he is perfectly clear. He has the express authority of the Lord—probably Jesus’ word as we have it in Mk. x. 11f. In ver. 11 re-marriage to another man is what is mainly in mind and this is forbidden. 12. “To the rest,” i.e., to those whose marriage relation is mixed, i.e., one party a Christian, the other an unbeliever. Jesus had not dealt with such cases. 13, 14. The Apostle would prefer that such couples continue to live together. He saw no sin in such unions *per se*. The sanctifying influence of the believing party was greater than the contrary influence of the other, especially in reference to the children. 15. The separation is supposed to be sought only by the unbelieving party. 16. Another consideration in addition to the one mentioned in ver. 14.

17-24. The call of Christianity was a call to a *new* life, a life of freedom, but of the inner man rather than in respect to secular relations. This very newness was apt to induce, in some, a certain restlessness and discontent, which showed itself in other matters than simply those connected with marriage. Paul’s general advice was: in whatever circumstances or conditions one was when

"called" (by the Gospel), in the same he was to be content to remain. The call did not mean that the external or secular status was to be changed. Several such conditions are mentioned by way of example. In 19 note how Paul emphasizes the essential thing. In 23 the language is doubly significant. Masters often freed their slaves by a fictitious sale of them to some deity. Paul includes all—masters and slaves—under one act, all have been bought with a price (the blood of Christ). All belong to one Divine Master.

(3) After the brief digression of vers. 17-24 the Apostle returns to the main theme. Among the questions that had been asked him there was one "concerning virgins" which he now proceeds to answer (25-40). We do not know the exact form of the question. Perhaps it was something like this: Would you advise fathers to seek to arrange marriages for their daughters? As before, the answer covers more than is included in the question. 25. Again Paul speaks according to his personal inclinations, not by express command of the Lord. Cf. vers. 6 and 12. 26. By "the distress that is upon us" Paul meant that the present trials (persecutions, etc.) seemed to indicate the nearness of a great crisis which would make any change of state unadvisable. He applies this principle to marriage in 27, 28, while in 29-31 he further extends the application. The early church did not expect the present order to continue long, hence Paul says: "the time (or season) is shortened." Alongside of that impending future the experiences of the present must not be valued too highly. 32. The thought is similar to that of Jesus in Mt. vi. 25-34. If the end of the age was at hand, marriage would involve one in many unnecessary anxieties. This thought is developed further in 33, 34. In 35 Paul again assures them that he is only trying to give them helpful advice, not trying to *capture* them (as by a *noose*) and make them conform to his ideas. The condition in which each might most fitly "attend upon the Lord" was what he desired to promote. 36-38. Advice to parents (fathers). The will or inclination of the daughter is not taken into account, as little attention was paid to that in antiquity. Note how Paul urges the parent to form his judgment with the greatest care. 39, 40. An additional word regarding the re-marriage of widows. This is held to be perfectly allowable, but only "in the Lord," i.e.,

from Christian motives and that the union should always be with a Christian (cf. 2 Cor. vi. 14). Still, Paul's *opinion* is that not to re-marry is preferable. While he thinks he has the Spirit's sanction in this opinion, he does not make of it a command.

2. Answer to the question concerning eating of food offered to idols (viii. 1-xi. 1).

The question was essentially this: Is it allowable for a Christian to partake of food that has been offered in sacrifice to an idol? Perhaps to the question they added as an argument in favor of the practice, that all Christians knew that idols were nothing. Paul found the question a hard one to answer. Two opposing sets of considerations were involved. (1) The *knowledge* that an idol is nothing, and the *right* of the Christian to act according to his knowledge. But (2) there was the fact (a) that all Christians were not equally clear in the knowledge that an idol is nothing, and (b) that in all contact with idolatry there lurked subtle temptations to which even the strongest were liable to succumb. Theoretically, Paul was inclined to favor the first set of considerations; practically, he felt bound to decide in favor of the second.

(1) In such cases knowledge must be subordinated to considerations of brotherly love (viii. 1-13). 1. "Meats offered to idols" were likely to be purchased by Christians in the markets (cf. x. 25), or put before them at public banquets or those given by heathen friends, especially when these were held in a temple (cf. ver. 10). Probably the words "we all have knowledge" are quoted by the Apostle from the church's letter. If so, there is sharp rebuke in the incisive words that follow: "Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies." Love is better than knowledge, for it accomplishes more. 3. It is the one who *loves*, not the one who *knows*, who is *known by God*. In vers. 1-3 the Apostle has revealed the main trend of his argument.

4. The fundamental principle of monotheism, already clear to the Jew, but which the heathen had to be taught as one of the rudiments of his new faith (cf. 1 Thess. i. 9). Paul, of course, had made this clear in his preaching. The words "no idol is in the world" mean "the deity an idol stands for has no real existence or significance." 5, 6 may also be a quotation from the

church's letter. The creed of the church was thoroughly monotheistic. In ver. 6 "to us" means "to us Christians" in distinction from the heathen. The wording of the creedal statement probably reflects Paul's careful teaching on these points. God is *source* and *end*, Christ is the *mediator*, of the *creative* as well the *redemptive* process. 7. Nevertheless, Paul knew that there were many in the church whose knowledge was defective. Before their conversion they had been idolaters and they "were used to the idol." In spite of themselves, the old habits of thought were still there and were strong. They still felt that to eat food that had been offered to an idol connected them in some real sense to the idol, i.e., the deity represented by the idol. 8 should be understood as a concession, thus: "But I admit that food will not commend us," etc. (i.e., at the final Judgment). Then, in 9, the thought of ver. 7 is continued: "Still, I insist that you should take heed lest," etc. 10. The idea is: the "weak" brother has been led to do something contrary to his conscience, or regarding which his conscience troubles him. Such conduct results in moral disaster. 11. The language is strong. Knowledge used to destroy another! And that the brother for whom Christ died! 13. Paul tells them how *he* would act in such a case.

(2) In the argument thus far, Paul has conceded to the one who has "knowledge" a certain right, but has asked him, for the sake of another, to waive the exercise of that right, declaring his own willingness to do the same (viii. 13). He now makes bold to go further and show how as an Apostle he was constantly waiving his rights for the sake of others (ix. 1-27). The demand he made (in ch. viii.) was thus shown to be one to which he conformed his own conduct.

1-3 state the fundamental position on which he rests his argument. He is an *Apostle*. No one can deny it. He has two great proofs: (1) he had *seen* the Glorified Jesus, as Christ and Lord (cf. Gal. i. 1, 11-16). This was his commission. (2) They themselves, his converts, were the seal of his Apostleship. This was the sufficient answer to those who would examine him. 4-6. As an Apostle, he had *rights*. The question-form only makes the assertion stronger. Three such rights he names: (1) to maintenance by the churches which he served. (2) To travel about,

accompanied by a wife, if he chose to do so. (3) To cease from manual labor and give *all* his time to the church. Each one of these rights Paul had waived voluntarily. Paul says "we" to include other devoted fellow-workers. The mention of Barnabas shows that the Corinthians knew about him and also implies that Paul entertained no hard feelings against him.

7-15a. A further vindication of the right to maintenance by the church (cf. ver. 4). There was some special reason, doubtless, why Paul felt it necessary to enlarge on this particular point. 7. Proof by analogy. Three simple questions the answer to which is self-evident. 8-10. Proof from Scripture (Dt. xxv. 4). This is a case of the common Jewish method of allegorical interpretation. Underneath the plain meaning of a passage a "spiritual" meaning was detected. In this instance the historical sense of the passage is not destroyed, but merely neglected for a principle the message inculcates, i.e., that the laborer should enjoy the fruit of his labors. This inference is drawn in ver. 10. 11. Application of the principle to the relation existing between the Apostle and the church. 12a implies that some Christian teachers actually had received support from the church at Corinth. 12b. Paul had not done this, but only in order that the Gospel might not be hindered. The *message* was thus freed from all suspicion of having been presented to them from motives of self-interest. 13, 14. Another proof from the regulations of the Temple services as contained in the Law (cf. Nu. xviii. and Dt. xviii.). Paul's deduction in ver. 14 is supported by such sayings of Jesus as we find in Mt. x. 10; Lk. x. 7. 15a. With this statement Paul concluded his argument as to his *right* to maintenance by the church. The right was his, *but he had not used it*.

15b-23. A full explanation of the reasons why he had not used his right. 15b. He is not now seeking to change his rule and have the church maintain him. Rather would he die than give up the renunciation in which he glories. 16, 17. First, he explains that he is under a great *necessity* to preach the Gospel. He cannot boast or "glory" in that fact. If he yields *willingly* to the necessity, he of course has the reward that comes to willing obedience; otherwise, he at least keeps the trust committed to him. 18 implies that he does it willingly, and his reward is the satisfaction he has in making the Gospel without charge, in not "using



to the full" (cf. vii. 31) his right. Paul counted this a precious privilege. 19-22. *Free to serve*, such is the principle Paul applies to himself. Preaching without pay gives him *freedom*; he uses the freedom to *serve*. This freedom enabled him to adapt himself to all classes, as he was under special obligation to none. The other freedom,—from the old bondage of the Law, the freedom of being "under law to Christ" (ver. 21) was also involved. Thus free, he sought to *serve*, even accommodating himself to *all*,—Jews, Gentiles, the weak and any others, in order to save at least some. 23. Loyalty to the Gospel moved him to act thus, and also the great matter of his own salvation. 24-27. From the familiar scenes of the stadium Paul draws two lessons: (1) not all win who run, and (2) the successful combatant must exercise self-control (ten months under a prescribed diet, with no indulgences of appetite or passion). In ver. 26f he applies these to himself. He runs *to win*, he strikes *to hit*. Only, it is *himself* whom he is thus racing with and seeking to subdue. If such was the serious task of the Christian life for *Paul*, what were the Corinthians to think as to themselves! By thus speaking of himself, he prepares the way for the next step in his argument.

(3) Thus far Paul has dealt mainly with the plea that the enlightened Christian has the "right" to eat things offered to idols. He now seeks to deal with the *danger* involved in any close contact with idolatry (x. 1-22). He advances two arguments: (1) The lesson taught by the experiences of ancient Israel, as to the danger and disastrous consequences of idolatry (vers. 1-14). (2) That communion at the table of the Lord should forbid communion with demons (vers. 15-22).

1. Paul says "our fathers," since the Christian Church was considered the true successor of Israel. The "cloud" was that mentioned in Ex. xiv. 19, 20, 24. 2. The passage through the sea is called a "baptism unto Moses," since in going into the waters at Moses' command the Israelites showed their faith in his word to them. 4, 5. The reference is to the manna (Ex. xvi.) and the supply of water as at Massah-Meribah (Ex. xvii. 1-7). The supernatural factor in these gifts, and the faith involved in partaking of them, enabled Paul to speak of them as "spiritual." The constant supply of food and drink of which they partook

was furnished them by Christ. 5. This was the sad fact. *All* Israel enjoyed these privileges, and yet *most* of them were destroyed by the Divine Judgment (cf. Nu. xiv).

6 begins the application to the Corinthians. "Examples," lit. *types*, means *warning examples*. The errors of ancient Israel were typical of those into which the Christian might fall. 7-10. Four kinds of sin to which Israel succumbed: *idolatry*, *fornication*, *tempting* ("making trial of") *the Lord*, and *murmuring*. The incidents referred to are found in Ex. xxxii.; Nu. xxv. 1-9, xxi. 5, 6; xiv. 2ff. Just such sins were showing themselves among the Corinthians. 11. Again we may notice how the Old Testament was appropriated in the Christian Church as essentially a Christian book. The Christian dispensation is viewed as the goal of all previous history. 12. Paul's main purpose is to warn them against overconfidence in their ability to resist the temptation to sin lurking in the idolatry everywhere present. 13. It is assumed that the temptation is real and that some might become discouraged by it. Paul would encourage them. Such temptations can be successfully resisted, and God's aid can be depended upon. 14 concludes the preceding argument and makes the transition to what follows.

15. By "wise" understand *shrewd, men of discernment*. Paul implies that the reasonableness of what he is about to write will be evident to them if they have good sense. 16. The reference is to the Lord's Supper. Jesus *blessed* the cup and *broke* the bread, made the cup the symbol of His blood and the bread the symbol of His body (cf. Mk. xiv. 22-24). Through these the participant enters into a *communion* with Christ's body and blood. Naturally, Paul is not thinking of a material communion, but of a *spiritual* one. The truth Paul is insisting on mainly is that there is an actual *communion* with Christ when the believer partakes of the Lord's Supper. To this he adds a second truth, 17, that this makes the Christians, though many, *one body*, since there is one bread. The members being all individually united to Christ are thereby united to each other. No individual Christian should do anything that might break this unity. But that is just what is done when a Christian eats of things offered to idols. This is the point in 18-21. In ver. 19 Paul shows that it is not the *material*, but the *spiritual factors* with which he is

concerned. A "thing offered to an idol" is in itself *nothing*, so is an idol (cf. viii. 4). But there is a reality behind idolatry,—that of the powers of evil, Satan and his demons, and these are they with whom the participants in an idol-feast hold communion (ver. 20). The conclusion in ver. 21 was inevitable, consequently the question (viii. 1) must be answered negatively. 22 is a warning. God's jealousy brooks no rival.

(4) In concluding his argument the Apostle comes back to the discussion of *liberty and the regard for another's conscience*. 23. Cf. vi. 12. "All things are lawful"; this was the plea used to defend their liberty by the more advanced party. Yes, Paul says, that is so; but other things are just as true, e.g., that not "all things" are beneficial, nor do they "edify," i.e., "build up" (others in character, or the church). 24. As in viii. 1, Paul is thinking of *love* as a better principle on which to act. 25-27. Two hypothetical cases illustrating how the strong Christian, acting simply for himself, may follow the principle of liberty. "Shambles" means "markets" or "meat shops." "Buy meat, if you wish," the Apostle says, "in the public market, with no scruple." Why? Because (you know) "the earth is the Lord's," etc. So, in the case of accepting an invitation to eat at a pagan's house (where also the meat used was likely to have been sacrificed to idols), go without scruple so far as *you alone* are concerned. 28. But if there is *another* conscience which is likely to be troubled, conduct must be governed accordingly. The informer may be supposed to be a heathen, but it is more likely that Paul had a weaker Christian, also one of the guests, in mind (cf. viii. 7ff). 29. But Paul recognizes that the stronger Christian is theoretically right, and is not to give up his *convictions* because of the weaker brother. 30. The strong Christian has (supposedly) partaken of the food after a sincere thanksgiving to God. To accuse him of really participating in idol-worship would be very wrong. 31, 32. Two great, comprehensive rules sum up the whole discussion. One, the first, is a supreme rule covering all conduct, well revealing the Apostle's own whole-hearted devotion to God. The second rule embodies that regard for others which was so greatly emphasized by Jesus (Mt. xviii.). Paul makes it all-comprehensive, covering non-Christians as well as the church membership. The glory of God, and the highest good of one's fellow men, such

are the guiding principles for the Christian. 33 and xi. 1. Conscious of his responsibility as an Apostle of Christ, and of his sincerity, Paul is glad to point them to his own example as illustrating the Christ-like life.

### Review-study of Chs. v.-x.

Work out the outline as suggested in the notes for both of the main sections (v.-vi., and vii.-x.). Taking the offence discussed in ch. v. as a *type*, what attitude does Paul suggest should be taken by Christians toward those who openly lead immoral lives? What distinction does Paul draw between the one who professes and the one who does not profess Christianity? Was Paul over-severe? Make a *wide* application of the advice given in vi. 1-11, and the principle involved in it. Define the difference between *liberty* and *license* (vi. 12-20) and try to apply Paul's teachings to some modern problems. Gather out from chs. viii.-xi. some rules that would apply to questions of today.

## IV

### Criticism and advice regarding their conduct in the public services of the Church (xi. 2; xiv. 40).

The information Paul had received, either by letter or by verbal reports, led him to feel that the public services of the church of Corinth were open to criticism, especially on three points: (1) that women were praying with unveiled heads (xi. 2-16); (2) that the Lord's Supper was observed in a disorderly manner (xi. 17-34); (3) that in the exercise of their spiritual gifts they were not governed by wise principles (xii. 1-xiv. 40).

1. Women should be veiled when at public worship (xi. 2-16). It is well to note that both *sentiment* and *reason* are in evidence in this discussion. The sentiment is that of *propriety*. It was not considered proper or modest for women, even in Greece, to appear in public with uncovered heads. Paul would not have Christian women give any occasion for the charge that they did not conduct themselves properly. But sentiment is not reason

and Paul therefore seeks to give the sentiment the support of something more solid.

2. The words are probably quoted from expressions of loyalty to the Apostle in the church's letter to Paul. Between this and the next verse we should then supply something like this: "But there is a matter about which I gave you no instructions which I must now deal with." 3 states a fundamental principle,—the unchangeable divine order,—as Paul understands it, which determines his whole argument. 4-6 state what is considered proper and orderly for both men and women. On "prophesying" see xii. 10. The force of vers. 5 and 6 is seen when we recall that usually slave-women had their heads shaved and that the shaven head was the punishment of adulteresses. 7-10. An argument based on the creation-stories in Genesis 1 and 2, the only science Paul knew. The reference to angels in ver. 10 probably means that angels are witnesses, invisibly present, at the church services and such a defiance of propriety would be offensive to them. The expression "authority on her head" means the veil or portion of the robe which was thrown over the head. 11, 12. In a sense a modification of the preceding statements. Paul's sense of the equality of all in Christ leads him to make this corrective addition. 13-15. Again an appeal to the sense of propriety. 16. Paul does not see how anyone, except for mere love of disputation or contention, would care to support such a violation of good order. If so, he is to be told plainly that no such custom is to be allowed in the church.

2. Censure of the disorderly way in which they were observing the Lord's Supper (xi. 17-34).

17. Understand thus: "Moreover, in giving you the following charge, I do not praise you; because you do not come together for the better, but for the worse." 18, 19 are introductory to the main charge. Paul has heard and is disposed to believe, that when the church meetings are held, divisions (such as between rich and poor, or the parties referred to in ch. i.) were apparent. Ver. 19 is somewhat ironical in tone, but on its face it gives the reason why Paul is disposed to believe what he has heard. Differences of opinion, he knew, were likely, especially in Corinth, and were also tests of character. 20. The usual custom was, at each Lord's Day

evening meeting of the church, for the members to partake together of a common meal, called a love-feast (Jude 12), also the Lord's Supper. Paul here tells the Corinthians that the way in which they conducted themselves at this common meal made it impossible to consider it a Lord's Supper. 21 gives the reason for ver. 20. Selfishness and excess on the part of some, the richer ones probably, hunger on the part of others, while unity, charity and brotherly love were absent. 22. Indignation and irony combined. They acted as though the church-meal were an ordinary meal, merely to satisfy hunger. Two serious charges are made against such conduct: it showed contempt of the sacred character of the church-meeting, and it put the poorer members to shame. 23-26. A statement of the real nature of the Lord's Supper which would show how wrong their conduct was. The account here is very similar to that in Luke (xxii. 19f), which differs in some points from that in Matthew or Mark. This account is the earliest one in the New Testament. The source of Paul's information was, he says, *the Lord*. Perhaps what he had heard from the actual participants at the Last Supper had been deepened and made more real to him in his spiritual experiences of the Lord's presence in the Supper. Two great truths embodied in the Supper are here emphasized by Paul: (1) That the broken body and shed blood (symbolized in the bread and wine) of the Lord Jesus *actually embodied* the accomplishment of a *new covenant-relationship* between God and man; (2) that the Supper was a *memorial*, intended to keep the fact of the Lord's death constantly before the mind of the church. The words "until He come" show the expectancy of the Lord's speedy return (cf. xvi. 22, also Lk. xxii. 18). 27. Paul now comes back to the conduct of the Corinthians. Such conduct as is described in ver. 20ff shows what is meant by "unworthily." After "guilty" we may supply something like "of sin in respect to." 28. "Prove" means to put the motives and actions to the test and then only if they are in accord with the meaning of the Supper to partake of the same. 29. Reiteration of the thought of ver. 27. "Judgment" means a judicial sentence of condemnation. Not to "discern the body" means not to realize how the elements (bread and wine) represent the crucified Lord. 30. Paul sees in the many cases of sickness, with some deaths, among the Cor-

inthians the judgment of God on them for their sin in respect to the Supper. 32. But the main purpose of such judgment was their chastening, not their final condemnation. 33, 34. Brief practical suggestions emphasizing the duty of waiting for one another (cf. ver. 21) and the fact that the Supper is not an ordinary meal.

3. Advice concerning their use of spiritual gifts (xii. 1-xiv. 40). The opening words of this section seem to imply that the church had asked Paul about this matter. Their question probably had to do with the distinction between the manifestations of the Holy Spirit and the workings of evil spirits. They did not know how to distinguish one from the other. The answering of the question involves Paul in an extended discussion. He first lays down a general principle (xii. 1-3), then points out how the diversity of gifts proceeds from the One Spirit (4-11). He next emphasizes the harmonious co-working of all gifts in the church, Christ's body (12-31), but also points out the one supreme "way" or virtue, Love, which should control both the spirit and method in which all gifts are to be exercised (ch. xiii.). He concludes by showing that gifts, especially tongues and prophecy, should always be used to *edify* others (ch. xiv.).

(1) The general principle. 1-3. The distinction they seek to know is to be found in the experience which makes the Christian confession possible. Paul is speaking only of *sincere* utterances on either side. A sincere confession of Jesus *as Lord* (the fundamental Christian confession) can come only from the Holy Spirit's presence in the heart. This *every* Christian has, but it leads out into a variety of modes of expression—which is the next point emphasized.

(2) Many gifts, one Spirit. 4-6. Each special endowment of the Spirit is called a "gift," or charism; viewed in respect to its service or usefulness it is a "ministry"; in respect to its power or effectiveness it is a "working." For "diversities" we might read "distribution"; cf. ver. 11. Note the trinitarian cast of vers. 4-6. 7. Each Christian has *his* particular endowment of the Spirit, but for the good of *all*. 8-10. A list (not necessarily exhaustive) of nine different manifestations or gifts of the Spirit. By the three first Paul means more than the average degree of wisdom, knowledge, and faith. It is the "word" of

wisdom and knowledge that is given, and it is such faith as will accomplish the seemingly impossible, like the "healings" and "workings of miracles," mentioned next in order, but not restricted to such. Miraculous deeds appear to have been common in the early church. By "prophecy" inspired discourse delivered in plain language is meant (cf. xiv. 3ff). Such discourse, as containing profound truths or hidden meanings, often needed to be "discerned" or explained by others (cf. xiv. 29f) who had the gift of "discernment" (ver. 10). The gift of "tongues" was not ability to speak a foreign language, but a kind of ecstatic utterance needing "interpretation," which required a special gift (cf. xiv. 2ff). 11. Once more Paul emphasizes that all this distribution of gifts is from *one* and the *same* Spirit, who gives each one the gift most appropriate to him.

(3) The harmonious co-working of all "gifts" in the church (12-31). This follows necessarily from the truth stated in ver. 11. To impress this truth Paul makes use of the body and its many members as an illustration. 12. The body is an organism filled with one life. It seems to be composed of many members, yet these many members are one body. "So is Christ," says Paul. He does not say "so is the church," for it is Christ whose "body" the church is. He is greater, for it is His life that animates and unifies all (cf. Jn. xv. 1-8). 13 explains the last words of ver. 12. Baptism is the seal of the act of faith by which one confesses Jesus as Lord (cf. ver. 3), which is the work of the Spirit. In baptism, therefore, one is "drenched" (not "made to drink") with the Spirit. Every Christian has this same experience of the same Spirit, thus *all* are *one*. 14-26. The working out of the illustration in detail. In this the Apostle brings out (1) that each and every member is a part of the body (14-17); (2) that each has its own function (18-20); and that all are mutually related and inter-dependent (21-26). 27-31. The application of the illustration. By "severally," understand "each in the part assigned to him." 28. Another way of stating what he has said in vers. 8-10 and 14-17. The three offices named first are the most important. The same person might fulfill all three functions at the same time. "Helps" and "governments" are to be taken in a general rather than technical sense. 29-30 correspond to vers. 18-20. 31. The "greater gifts" are such as teach-



ing or prophecy. But such earnest desire might easily lead to jealousy and strife. So the Apostle is led to say that there is a "way" of attaining the true goal of all spiritual life, in itself "most excellent," above any other, and sure of success.

(4) *Love*, the most excellent way (ch. xiii.). In this passage the Apostle reveals his innermost life, the core of his estimate of what constitutes character. 1-3. The supreme necessity of love; any and all other gifts or attainments are nothing if one has not love. Beginning with the gift of tongues, and stating the case as strongly as possible (even angel tongues), Paul specifies by way of example the more important of the gifts mentioned in xii. 8-10, such as prophecy, wisdom, knowledge and faith. Of each and all he says that their possession without love amounts to nothing. He goes further than this and says that even the most extreme cases of apparent generosity or self-sacrifice without love are worthless. Nowhere does Paul show more clearly where he placed the emphasis in the Christian life. It is the heart-character that determines the value of all attainment or action. 4-7. Love's characteristics or qualities. Each brief statement might be expanded and illustrated at length. 8-13. The perpetual place of love. There is no time, situation, or state where love is not necessary, or where its function can be said to have ceased. Intellectual attainments may develop from the immature state to perfection and then, in a sense, "cease." Faith may pass into sight and hope into realization. *Now* we know and see truth only imperfectly, as countenances were seen in the imperfect metal mirrors of Paul's day. Sometime our knowledge will be complete. But in and through the whole process love is necessary, and when perfection comes, love, the full and perfect fellowship of the redeemed with their Father and Saviour and with each other, will find its fullest exercise.

(5) The exercise of the gifts of tongues and prophecy in the church (ch. xiv.). The Apostle now returns to the main theme, resuming the thought of xii. 31.

The gift of prophecy is to be preferred because it is more edifying to the church (vers. 1-20). 1. "Follow after (better, "pursue") love." This is the supreme rule. Now Paul can repeat the recommendation of xii. 31, having subordinated it to a higher rule. Of all the spiritual gifts Paul seems to put "prophecy"

first, but this may be because the church had asked particularly about two gifts, prophecy and tongues. Reasons now follow why prophecy is to be preferred. 2. The meaning is, the sound made is not intelligible; heard but not understood by others. The speaker is in an ecstatic state. 3. The one who "prophesies," on the contrary, speaks to *men*, to their minds, with the intent to be understood and of service, either in the way of "upbuilding" ("edification"), or "exhortation" or "encouragement." 4. What is done in public services should be done for the whole assembly, not for one's own delectation. 5. The only way speaking with tongues could be of service was that the speaker, or some other one who was able, should interpret the otherwise unintelligible utterances (cf. xii. 10). 6. "I" simply makes the case more concrete. A speaker should communicate something to another. If he has a "revelation" or "knowledge" (of a higher kind), it is only by "prophecy" (earnest, inspired, but intelligible utterance) or by "teaching" that he can give it to others. Mere sounds cannot do it. 7-13. Two illustrations or comparisons, both intended to enforce this thought: that a sound, whether of inanimate objects (7, 8) or of living beings (10, 11), must be *understood*, in order to have any value for the hearer. Twice (vers. 9-12, 13) Paul urges the force of the comparison on the attention of his readers, and points out its bearing on their conduct. In ver. 12 "voices" is practically equivalent to "languages." 14-20: What goes on in the "spirit" (of the one who is praying or giving thanks or the like) must be grasped by the mind or intellect of another (in the same worshipping assembly) in order that he may be benefited thereby. "Spirit" is used to mean the deeper realm of religious feeling in contrast to the more clearly discernible actions of the intellect. In ver. 16 the "unlearned" are the less gifted or discerning portion of the congregation. It was customary (as in the Jewish synagogue) for the whole assembly to say "Amen" to the various religious exercises. Note the *freedom* of the church meetings implied in ver. 15, 16. Ver. 20 means that to admire and desire the gift of tongues, simply because it seems very wonderful, is childish. 21-25. The Apostle advances one more argument: The gift of tongues is indeed a "sign" to the unbelieving, but if it were the only gift in exercise in the public service it would bring the church into ridicule. "Law"

in ver. 21 is used comprehensively for Scripture. Paul generalizes the passage in Is. xxviii. 11f which referred originally to invaders speaking a foreign language by whom Jehovah would punish His people. The tongues of the foreigners were thus a "sign" of God's judgment to His unbelieving people. So the "tongues" (really of a different sort) in the church may be a sign to the unbelieving. But that does not mean that they are the greatest and most desirable of all gifts. To point this out is the purpose of vers. 23-25.

26-36. Practical advice regarding the exercise of the spiritual gifts in the public services. The guiding principle should be: "all things done unto edifying." This may necessitate self-restraint especially for those with the gift of tongues (vers. 28, 29). The free action of the Spirit must be preserved. If one is given a revelation he must be allowed instantly to make it known (ver. 30). If God's Spirit really rules there will be no disorder (ver. 33a). These principles hold good for all the churches. Vers. 34, 35 appear like an insertion and in some manuscripts they come after ver. 40. Perhaps they are not from Paul. They certainly seem to break the connection between ver. 34 and ver. 36, and are hard to harmonize with xi. 1-15. 36 connects directly with ver. 33; if the Corinthian church should refuse to follow such directions, they would assume that they had independent authority to regulate the practices of all churches. 37-40. The final word on this subject. The Apostle is sure that he has given the right advice. Only the "ignorant" will disregard it (vers. 37, 38). In 39 we have another of those finely balanced sentences so characteristic of Paul. 40. Once more the insistence on good order.

### Review-study of Chs. xi.-xiv.

On the basis of the hints given in the notes work out an outline of these chapters. Do you think Paul gave the church of Corinth a fixed and detailed order of church service? Why should any special importance have been attached to such a matter as is discussed in xi. 2-16? Why did not Paul approve of the new custom? Describe a primitive-Christian observance of the Lord's Supper (xi. 17-34). How was this abused at Corinth? What is

meant by "spiritual gifts" in chs. xii.-xiv.? Why does Paul so emphasize "edification"? Did Paul consider the gift of tongues as very important? What does Paul mean by *love* in ch. xiii.?

## V

## The Resurrection of the Body (ch. xv.).

There were some at Corinth who denied the resurrection of the body (see vers. 12 and 35), though they appear not to have denied the resurrection of Jesus. Paul therefore determines to devote a portion of the letter to this question. He seeks to show (1) that *to deny the doctrine of the resurrection of the body is to deny a fundamental article of the faith* (1-34), and then (2) he seeks to throw some light on *the nature of the resurrection body* (35-38).

A. The doctrine of the resurrection of the body is involved in the fact of the resurrection of Christ (1-34).

1. The resurrection of Christ is a *fundamental fact in the Gospel message* (1-11). Though the resurrection of Christ was not denied in Corinth, Paul felt that it was necessary to set forth the fundamental character and significance of this fact as central and decisive of the whole question at issue.

1, 2. Solemnly, and with a slight tinge of reproach, Paul seeks to recall their minds to the original *Gospel message*, as they had received it from him and in the reception of which they were experiencing salvation, unless they had believed only "rashly" or hastily (better than "in vain"). 3, 4. Paul recounts the *chief points* or facts (such is the idea in "first of all") of the Gospel proclamation: the atoning death, the burial and the resurrection of Christ. Paul had "received" this: i.e., this was the generally accepted tradition received from the original apostles. Since 1 Cor. was written about 56 A. D., we see that the conviction regarding Jesus' resurrection was firmly held from the first. Both the death and the resurrection were believed to have taken place "according to the Scriptures," but the Old Testament passages are not cited (see Luke xxii. 37; xxiv. 26f; Acts ii. 24-32). 5-7. A list of witnesses to the fact of the resurrection, i.e., of the resurrected Lord Jesus. Compare the list of appearances given in the Gospels, remembering that this is the earliest. 8.

There was one more appearance of the risen Lord, to Paul more significant than to any other. The comparison mentioned suggests: (1) lack of full development; and (2) repulsive appearance. Perhaps Paul here echoes a contemptuous epithet flung at him by enemies because of his unattractive appearance (cf. 2 Cor. x. 10). But it was probably (1) that was mainly in his mind. His conversion was sudden, unexpected, unprepared for. He was *born* into the Christian faith without the normal or usual preceding preparation. That made his experience the more significant. 9, 10. Paul could not think of that experience without feeling how great was the grace of God toward and in him. 11 refers to vers. 3, 4. Such was the Gospel preached by all.

2. To deny the resurrection of the body is to deny the resurrection of Christ and therefore to destroy the Christian's faith and hope (12-19).

12. The "if" assumes the undeniable fact that the resurrection of Christ is "preached" and the preaching is believed. But *how then* can those who profess to believe the Gospel say, "there is no (such thing as a) resurrection of dead men"? 13. Such a statement, if true, would do away with the resurrection of Christ. 14. It would therefore "empty" Christian faith of its real substance (the meaning of "vain" here). 15. And it also makes a falsehood of the testimony of those who said (as Paul did) that they had seen the risen Christ. 16-19. From the same denial another result follows. Not only is faith emptied of its substance (vers. 13-15) but it is void of *result* or *effect* (the meaning of "vain" in ver. 17). No forgiveness of sin is assured, and the Christian hope is limited strictly to this life only,—a most pitiable condition.

3. On the other hand, the risen Christ is the "firstfruits," i.e., the sign and promise of the great universal resurrection of all believers, which will be followed by the full realization of the Kingdom of God (20-28). 20. "But now," i.e., "An end to such false suppositions. Turn now to *the truth*. Christ *has been* raised." "Firstfruits": cf. Lev. xxiii. 10-14. The sheaf of the firstfruits of the harvest was presented on the Sunday after the Passover, i.e., the Sunday the Christians observed as the Resurrection Sunday. The illustration is very apt. Christ's resurrection is the pledge of the resurrection-harvest to follow. 21. Christ is the second Adam, the divine-human head of a new

humanity. Cf. Rom. v. 12ff and below, vers. 45-47. 22. As there was power in that connection or relation between Adam and his posterity to transmit his sin and death to them, so there is in Christ a *life* that is communicated to those in vital relation to Him and their resurrection is thus assured. 23. This will be manifested at the "Parousia" (see 1 Thess., notes on iv. 13ff) when the resurrection of those "that are Christ's" shall take place. 24. "The end," i.e., of the present dispensation or æon (cf. Mt. xiii. 39; xxiv. 3), the culmination of the redemptive process. The Kingdom of God shall then be fully realized, and Christ's part in bringing it about shall have been accomplished. He shall not then cease to be Son, but cease to be the head of a developing, progressing, redemptive Kingdom. Cf. Rom. viii. 37-39. 25. Based on Ps. cx. 1. 27. Cf. Ps. viii. 7. "He" in the last clause of the verse, refers to God the Father.

4. The bearing of the resurrection-truth on one's practical life (29-34). 29. In the first place, if any had been led to profess the Christian faith "on behalf of the dead," i.e. (as seems most probable), because of their affection for the dead, who were Christians and had died in the faith and wished their friends to share their hope, such persons, if there were no resurrection, would have been baptized to no purpose. Their fond hopes of reunion would be found baseless. 30-32. In the second place, denial of the resurrection gives terrible force to the Epicurean maxim: "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die" (cf. Is. xxii. 13). Paul cites his own life of suffering and trial as an illustration. Ver. 32 is probably to be taken figuratively. Paul was bitterly opposed in Ephesus, cf. Acts xix. 23ff. 33, 34. Urgent appeal to think in a more wholesome manner. Such thinking as they are indulging in is on a low plane, and awakens suspicion that the life is correspondingly low. A common proverb would teach them the danger they are in. Let them awake from such sloth and sinful ignorance.

#### B. The resurrection-body (35-58).

1. Its nature (35-49). The resurrection seemed *inconceivable* to some in Corinth. To Greeks it was a strange idea. 36-38. Paul seeks to show, first that in nature the *change to life through or out of death* is a common fact: hence the resurrection-idea need not be pronounced absurd (ver. 36). The same natural

world shows also that the new plant (or "body") that arises out of an old seed is *different* (in appearance, etc., ver. 37f) from that out of which it springs. God's creative power brings this about (ver. 38). 39-41 illustrate still further the idea of the infinite variety of bodies God has made (can He not, then, make a resurrection-body?). 42a. In a few words Paul applies the illustration: "*So* also is the resurrection of the dead," and then proceeds to explain the idea more fully (in the light of the illustration). 42b-44. Corruption, dishonor, weakness, a mere "natural" body,—such words characterize the body laid in the grave. Through God's power, their opposites characterize the resurrection-body. In ver. 44 the main distinction is stated, that between the "natural" and the "spiritual," the latter being the element or quality most closely allied to the divine personality. 45. Again, as in vers. 21, 22, a parallel is drawn between Adam and Christ. Gen. ii. 7 is quoted, but the other half of the statement is Paul's own. Christ, the "last Adam," is *life-giving*, He imparts *spiritual* life. 46-49. The order of historical development, the "ascent of man" from the "natural" to the "spiritual," Adam first, then Christ, assures us that the process will be carried on to its glorious culmination.

2. The change (50-53). 50. By "body" in the preceding argument Paul has meant the whole human organism. As such it consists of a material, physical element, "flesh and blood," and a spiritual. The former, because it is "corruption," i.e., subject to decay, cannot form the basis of the organism that is to endure forever. 51. Consequently, a *change* is necessary. Paul sets this forth as a "mystery," i.e., something known to him only through a revelation. 52, 53. It is only the *fact* and *sudden character* of the change that was revealed to Paul, not its process or method. The "all" means all Christians, whether dead or alive at the time of the Parousia (cf. 1 Thess. iv. 15-18 and notes thereon). The inner character of the change is indicated in ver. 53: the perishable and the mortal shall give way, to be exchanged for the imperishable and the immortal.

3. The glorious consummation (54-57). 54. One aspect of this Paul emphasizes in particular: *death* shall then be finally conquered, robbed of its power. Thus an ancient prophetic hope (Is. xxv. 8, the difference in reading is insignificant) shall be

realized. 55. A free use of Hos. xiii. 14. 56, 57. Only the gift of eternal life in Christ can enable one to sing the triumph over death and sin as Paul does here.

58. With such a hope, firmly founded on the *fact* of the resurrection of Christ, a strong, positive, aggressive, fruitful Christian life should characterize every believer. Such a life has a *result*, it is not "vain" (empty), but filled with solid and abiding consequences.

## VI

Information and notices on various practical and personal matters (xvi. 1-18).

1. Concerning the collection (vers. 1-4). For other (later) notices concerning this, see 2 Cor. viii., ix.; Gal. ii. 10; Rom. xv. 25-27, also Acts xxiv. 17. 1. We have no other information regarding this injunction to the Galatians. 2. Paul prescribed a method only, not the amount each one should give; that was left to the individual conscience of each. Paul wished the collection to be all ready when he visited Corinth. 3, 4. At this time Paul seems to have planned to send the collections separately, as each church had them ready, by delegates from the respective churches. As it turned out, all the delegates journeyed together with Paul to Jerusalem (cf. Acts xx. 4).

2. Information regarding his plan to visit them (vers. 5-9). This plan was not destined to be fulfilled exactly as here set forth. See 2 Cor. i. 15-ii. 13; Acts xix. 21, 22; xx. 1-6 and the Introduction to the Corinthian Epistles in this book, pp. 41f. 7. Paul did not wish to see them merely "by the way." He wanted to "tarry a while." In fact, he seems to have been compelled to make a flying visit shortly after sending this letter (see above, p. 45).

3. Regarding Timothy's visit (vers. 10, 11) see above, p. 44.

4. A word concerning Apollos (ver. 12). Apollos had made a deep impression on the church of Corinth during his stay there (cf. Acts xviii. 24-28), so that some even placed him above Paul (cf. i. 12). This verse shows that Paul entertained no ill-will toward him.



5. A brief, practical exhortation, perhaps suggested by the mention of Apollos with the remembrance that there was an Apollos-party in the church (vers. 13, 14).

6. A special word concerning the household of Stephanas (vers. 15, 16), who was evidently the first convert Paul gained in Corinth (cf. i. 16). Stephanas and household gave themselves *voluntarily* to the service of the church, and thus they and every other one who did likewise exercised rightfully a certain authority, which, however, was never to be autocratic (cf. ver. 18).

7. How the coming of Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus had refreshed him (vers. 17, 18).

Conclusion of the Epistle (vers. 19-24). This consists, as usual, of salutations and a benediction. 19. Cf. Acts xviii. 1-4, 18, 26. 20. Cf. note on 1 Thess. v. 26. 21. Paul adds the remainder in his own handwriting, as a seal to the genuineness of the letter (cf. 1 Thess. v. 25). 22. Two earnest watchwords, the first: "let him be anathema ("cursed")" to be applied to anyone who *does not love* (and yet professes to) the Lord. Paul well knew that some members of the church might be false. The other word is the Christian's word of ardent expectation and welcome of his Lord when He comes. Maran (= "Lord" or "Our Lord"), atha (= "come") was an Aramaic expression, probably used commonly in the very earliest days of the church. 24. Paul's last word in this letter is the expression of his *love* for them all. A beautiful conclusion to a great message.

### Final Review-study of 1 Cor.

1. Review of chs. xv. and xvi. Outline the discussion in ch. xv. Why was it necessary for Paul to deal with this subject? Which does Paul make of most significance, the resurrection *fact* or the *theory* by which it may be illustrated or explained? What place does Paul give to faith in the *risen* Lord in a Christian's faith? What is the practical truth taught in vers. 29-34? Try to state it as a principle to guide us today. What is the essential truth in ver. 50? State over in your own words the sense of ver. 58 (including the first word, "wherefore").

2. Ch. xvi. Give the story of the collection referred to in vers.

1-4. What was Paul's plan referred to in vers. 5-9? How was it fulfilled?

3. Now recall the plan of the whole Epistle. State some of the personal traits of Paul's character that you may have noticed in this study. What are some of the truths you have gained from 1 Cor.?



**THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS**



## THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS

### 1. Introduction

#### 1. To whom addressed.

The expression, "the churches of Galatia" (i. 2), shows that the letter was sent to a group of churches in Galatia. Since Paul usually uses such terms as Achaia, Macedonia, etc., in their official Roman sense, it is possible that "Galatia" here means the Roman province of that name, and that the churches were those organized by Paul and Barnabas in the southern part of that province on their first missionary journey (Acts xiii.-xiv). On the other hand, the older view, that these churches were located in old Galatia proper and had been founded by Paul on his *Second Journey* (cf. Acts xvi. 6) and were revisited by him on his *Third Journey* (cf. Acts xviii. 23), still has many able advocates.

#### 2. Date.

The Epistle is usually considered to have been written at Ephesus while Paul was there engaged in his great work of spreading the Gospel in the province of Asia, i.e., in the latter half of the period covered by the so-called *Third Missionary Journey* (Acts xix.). It seems more probable, however, that the Epistle was written after Paul had closed his work at Ephesus and after his last letter to the Corinthians (2 Cor. i.-ix., see above p. 46), i.e., while on his way from Ephesus to Corinth, perhaps while stopping in Macedonia (Acts xx. 1, 2). The main reason for this view is that the correspondence with the Corinthian church reveals no trace of such a severe attack from the side of Judaism on Paul's Gospel as is seen to have been in active operation when he wrote to the Galatians. It is likely, then, that Paul was not aware of that attack when he wrote to the Corinthians, but became aware of it first in Macedonia.

#### 3. The occasion of the Epistle.

This is very evident from i. 6; iii. 1, etc. A movement was on foot to persuade the Galatian churches to desert the simple type of Christian faith they had learned from Paul for an ex-

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treme type of Jewish Christianity in which submission to the formal, ceremonial law (circumcision, etc.) was made a condition necessary to salvation. When Paul learned of this he was astonished and deeply hurt (cf. i. 6; iii. 1-5). He saw clearly the issue that was at stake. It was no mere quibble of words, but a life or death crisis for the Gospel. Whether Christianity was to be a mere appendage to Judaism, or to be free, with faith in Christ the all-determining condition, such was the issue. In this letter Paul sought to expose thoroughly the gravity of the situation and put an end to the influence of this dangerous teaching in his Gentile churches. In this he was successful, and the Epistle remains a witness to the triumph of the great Apostle in his championship of the Christian's liberty in Christ.

### 4. Analysis.

Although Paul when he wrote Galatians was profoundly stirred, and wrote in some haste, the Epistle is not without plan. The following brief analysis will show this:

Introductory (i. 1-10).

- I. Personal, a defence of his Apostolate and of the validity of the Gospel he preached (i. 11-ii. 21).
- II. Doctrinal exposition of the real character of the Gospel-salvation (iii. 1-v. 12).
  1. The *experience* of salvation is by *faith*, not by the Law (iii. 1-14).
  2. The covenant-promise is superior to the Law (iii. 15-29).
  3. Christians are *sóns*, not slaves in bondage to the Law (iv. 1-v. 12).
- III. Practical advice as to the general character of the Christian life (v. 13-vi. 10).

Conclusion—Reiteration of the main truth of the letter (vi. 11-17).

## 2. Commentary

### Introductory Section. i. 1-10

This comprises: (1) The usual epistolary beginning, i.e., signature and address (vers. 1, 2), with a brief, carefully

worded blessing (vers. 3-5); then (2) an expression of the Apostle's *surprise* at the change that has taken place with them (vers. 6-10). This serves to introduce the *theme* of the Epistle. 1. The *assertive* character of the opening words is to be noted. Paul's *apostolic* authority had been questioned. He asserts it in most positive terms at the very beginning of the letter. He was not [sent] from *men* (as the Twelve, or a church), nor was he [converted, or endued with the spirit], through [the act of any] man, but through the direct act of God (Jesus Christ and the Father who raised Him from the dead). This great fact he states more fully in vers. 15, 16. 2. For the location of these churches see above p. 89. 3-5. One cannot help noting the unusual length of this greeting. The addition (vers. 4, 5) to the usual formula (see note on 1 Thess. i. 1) emphasizes the *redemptive work of Christ*, which was the very thing at stake in the acceptance of the false doctrine the Galatians were receiving. 6. In ordinary cases Paul follows the greeting with a warm-hearted thanksgiving. That is lacking here. Instead, he declares his surprise at the news he has received about them. Indignation as well as surprise is indicated. "Quickly" may mean "rashly," i.e., as soon as the other view was presented, they adopted it without taking time to examine it. "In grace" is a better reading than "in the grace of Christ." Paul emphasizes the fact that the real gospel call was of God's *grace*. Such had been his own experience. The last words of ver. 6 and the first of ver. 7 may be paraphrased: to a different kind of Gospel, as you suppose, but which is not a different *Gospel*, since there can be but one Gospel. 7. Instead of being a Gospel, it was an attempt to pervert Christ's Gospel. Paul speaks of the leaders of this heresy vaguely ("some"), though he may have known their names. Doubtless they came to Galatia from without, probably from Jerusalem or Antioch. 8, 9. Paul writes out of the absolute certainty that his Gospel is the only Gospel. He had warned them of these false teachings on some previous occasion. 10. Perhaps aimed at a calumny circulated by his enemies that he was a mere time-server. Paul was indeed willing to be "all things to all men" (1 Cor. ix. 20) and frequently yielded to Jewish prejudice (cf. Acts xvi. 3; xxi. 20ff). But not where the essential character of the Gospel was involved. The sense of ver. 10 is: "at this time



am I acting as though I were responsible only to men and not to God? If I were still (as I was once before I knew Christ) pleasing *men*, I should not be a servant (lit. "slave") of Christ."

## I

**Personal. Defence of his Apostolic status and of the validity of his Gospel. i. 11-ii. 21.**

The attack on the genuineness of Paul's Gospel was combined with an attack on his apostolic standing; his right to be considered an apostle was questioned. Both charges are answered by Paul together as being so involved that one stood or fell with the other.

11, 12. The *theme* of the whole Epistle: the divine authority of the Gospel he preached. "I make known," i.e., as something you already know, but need to have very clearly in mind at this time (cf. 1 Cor. xii. 3; xv. 1). By "the Gospel," Paul means the main contents of his message as an apostle. "After man," i.e., of human origin or according to man's notions. Paul's reason was a simple but absolutely convincing one: no man had given him or taught him his Gospel; he had been taught it directly through a revelation of ("from") Jesus Christ. Paul now proceeds to prove in detail what he has asserted in vers. 11, 12 and show its significance.

1. He first shows that there was nothing in his early life and training to give him the Gospel (vers. 13, 14). 13. Paul had probably told the Galatians something of his earlier history, in the "Jews' religion" (literally "in Judaism"): i.e., when he was a Jew in prejudice and conduct. He not only persecuted the church "beyond measure," but "was endeavoring to destroy it" (cf. Acts vii. 58-viii. 1; ix. 1ff; xxii. 3ff; xxvi. 9ff). 14 shows *why* Paul persecuted the church: he was an unusually zealous champion of the Rabbinic traditions; i.e., he was a zealous Pharisee (cf. Phil. iii. 5, 6).

2. He states, next, that his conversion and earlier Christian experience were not dependent on any human agency (vers. 15-17). 15. Paul felt that he was predestined from birth to his apostleship. His early life was then a divinely ordered prepara-

tion; when that was complete he was "called." He was called "through grace"; i.e., he had done nothing to deserve it. He had not earned it. When it came it was all due to God's love and mercy. Paul never could forget this. 16. Here Paul emphasizes the *heart* of his experience at his conversion, not the accompanying circumstances (for these see Acts ix. 1ff; xxii. 3ff; xxvi. 10ff). Jesus was revealed to Paul's soul as God's *Son* (therefore not a mere man who had been justly condemned as Paul had supposed). This revelation included the facts of the *resurrection* and divine, heavenly *life* of Jesus (cf. 1 Cor. xv. 8). One great *purpose* of the revelation was that Paul should be the Apostle to the Gentiles. Paul does not say here that he apprehended this at once. All these facts Paul implies (cf. xiii.) that his readers knew already. What he wants them to particularly bear in mind is that when he was converted he "conferred not with flesh and blood." He sought no man to explain or complete for him what he had experienced in his own soul from God alone. 17. He retired (probably for solitary meditation) to "Arabia," the desert region near Damascus, then *came back* to Damascus (incidental evidence that the conversion was at or near Damascus as Acts says). See also 2 Cor. xi. 32, 33.

3. So it was during all the early part of his apostolic career, he had only the slightest contact with the primitive apostles, or with the mother church, although this, such as it was, was friendly (vers. 18-24). 18. The "three years" emphasizes how *long* it was before he communicated with any of the Twelve. The word "visit" implies a desire to become acquainted with and learn from Peter whatever he might be able to tell him. Naturally Paul desired to learn as much as possible of what Jesus said and did. He could have learned much during fifteen days. 21. Cf. Acts ix. 30; xi. 25. 24. Evidently, Paul was viewed with no disfavor at this time by the mother church.

4. Furthermore, Paul's apostolic standing and his Gospel, as he preached it to the Gentiles, had received the *express sanction* of the leaders of the mother church (ii. 1-10).

1. This visit was the same as that mentioned in Acts xv. Paul's account is that of one of the chief actors and deals mainly with what was *to him* the chief point at issue. Luke's account in Acts is from a somewhat different point of view. This council

or conference was held after the return of Paul and Barnabas from their First Missionary Journey, about 49 A. D. The "fourteen years" was probably counted by Paul from his conversion (c. 35 A. D.). Both Barnabas and Titus were apparently well known to the Galatians, the latter being perhaps, like Timothy, a Galatian convert. Paul appears not to have considered the visit of Acts xi. 30 as of any importance for this discussion. 2. The revelation Paul speaks of here may have come to him while the discussion was going on at Antioch (see Acts xv. 1, 2). "The Gospel which I preach among the Gentiles," i.e., salvation by *faith* in God's grace in Christ alone, without any use of or dependence on the Jewish Law. This was the Gospel he had preached to the Galatians and in which they had believed. By "those that were of repute" Paul meant such leaders as Peter, John, James the Lord's brother, etc. If they had refused to approve Paul's Gospel and work, then indeed a most serious hindrance would have been put in Paul's way. The pronounced disapproval of the Apostles Jesus Himself had chosen would have been almost fatal; Paul would have "run in vain." 3-5 are parenthetical. The main thought is resumed at ver. 6. The sense of these intense, but broken, statements is: "at that council, in spite of the efforts made by zealous partizans, I would not yield and Titus was not circumcised." The "false brethren" are probably the same parties as are mentioned in Acts xv. 1. At the end of ver. 5 "with you" should be "*for* you." 6. The continuation of ver. 2. The main statement is the last one: that those in "repute" made no change in his Gospel. The order of statement in the verse is broken; the parenthetical middle part of the verse interrupted the order and the first words were repeated in slightly different form. The parenthesis is important; it means, in connection with ver. 2, that though Paul desired to have his Gospel approved by the mother church, that was not because he felt that *its truth* was dependent on their opinion, or because he felt that they were in higher favor with God than he was. 7-9. The result of the conference: Paul's mission to the Gentiles and the validity of his Gospel frankly acknowledged by such leaders as James, Peter and John, with a recognition of two general spheres of missionary activity, that to the Gentiles, to be carried on by Paul and Barnabas, and that to the Jews to be cared for by

the original Apostles and their associates. Thus Paul won a great victory, and the Judaizing emissaries who had been belittling his apostolic standing and saying that his Gospel was not true or sufficient were shown to be acting contrary to the express declarations of the very leaders of the mother church. 10. Cf. note on 1 Cor. xvi. 1.

5. Finally, Paul shows that Peter himself, at Antioch, had accepted the truth of Paul's Gospel, but had afterwards weakly yielded to the criticism of strict Jewish-Christians from Jerusalem, for which Paul had publicly rebuked him (11-21). 11. This visit was probably *after* the council in Jerusalem. 12. Evidently it had long been the custom in the Church of Antioch for Jewish and (uncircumcised) Gentile-Christians to fellowship freely together (cf. Acts xi. 20-24). By conforming to this custom Peter placed himself definitely on the side represented by Paul, just as he had supported Paul in the discussion at Jerusalem (cf. Acts xv. 7-11). It is not probable that James sent messengers to Antioch expressly to oppose and change the customs of the Antioch church. But they were "of the circumcision," i.e., Jewish-Christians who insisted on circumcision as necessary to salvation, and could not hold back their determined opposition to what they now saw. 13. That not only Peter, but even Barnabas, Paul's intimate friend and fellow-worker, yielded to their criticisms only shows how deeply rooted the prejudice was. Paul called this yielding "dissimulation" (lit. "hypocrisy") because he knew that such conduct did not express the real convictions of Peter and Barnabas and the rest of the "Jews" (i.e., Jewish-Christians) who followed their example. 14. For "uprightly" read "straightforward." Though left alone and, doubtless, deeply grieved, Paul did not lose his courage, but addressed himself directly to Peter. Peter had lived "as the Gentiles" when he had eaten with them (ver. 12). By so doing he had practically renounced the position of the circumcision party. In going back to this old position he was not only inconsistent, but the logical consequence of it would be that Gentile Christians would have to conform to Judaism. 15, 16. Paul then recalled to Peter what was *fundamental* in the religious experience of them both: namely, that their *Judaism* had not saved them. Through Jesus they themselves had been saved by faith in Christ,

not by the works of the Law (cf. Peter's words at the Council, Acts xv. 7-11). Thus they had abandoned the Law as a means to salvation. 17, 18. The sense of these difficult verses seems to be: Peter's act in eating with Gentiles was judged to be *sinful* (as a breach of the Law) by the strict Jewish-Christians. Does Christ then lead one to sin? No, indeed! The sin was in Peter's second act, in his building up again the trust in the Law for salvation which he had once put away as unable to save him.

19. In this and the two following verses Paul unfolds his own experience. "Law" means moral law in general not the Mosaic law alone, and "the" should be omitted. The moral law says: "Thou shalt not sin." But Paul knew that he did sin and therefore law only condemned him but did not save him. So through the law itself he "died" to it, i.e., he ceased to trust it for salvation and was led to a new way of life (cf. Rom. vii. 7-25). 20 explains ver. 19. In faith, i.e., whole-hearted trust, Paul had given himself to Christ, and by that faith united himself to Christ. As Christ's death for sin finished the claims of law on man as a guilty sinner, so Paul identified himself in loving trust with Christ as the One who loved him and gave Himself for him. The old life under the Law was given up forever as hopeless. The life he now lived "in the flesh," i.e., for the rest of his earthly life, was a new life, the life of Christ regnant in him through his faith in Christ (cf. Rom. vi. 1-6). 21. Paul viewed the death of Christ as of supreme importance. If he had not he would have "rejected" (better than "make void") the grace of God revealed therein and counted the death as of no significance.

### Questions for study and review of Gal. i. and ii.

Where was Galatia? What churches were addressed in this letter? When and by whom were they founded?

What led Paul to write this letter? Why did Paul view the matter so seriously? In what spirit or temper did he write? How do you account for the absence of the usual thanksgiving (which we would expect at i. 6)?

What is Paul trying to establish, in the main, in the section i. 11-ii. 21? State in your own words the thought of i. 11, 12. What are the successive steps in Paul's argument by which he

seeks to prove his claim? Is what he says in i. 15, 16 mere theory or experience? Supplement Paul's words here by the accounts in Acts, chs. ix., xxii., and xxvi. If Paul states a *fact* of his experience in i. 15, 16 how important is that for us? Why was Peter's inconsistent conduct at Antioch a serious matter?

## II

**Doctrinal argument (iii. 1-v. 12).** Having proved that his Gospel was from God and that both his Gospel and his apostolic standing had been sanctioned by the mother church, especially its leaders, Paul next proceeds to argue the question in a more doctrinal manner.

1. In the first place he contends that the *experience* of salvation is of *faith*, and not through fulfilling the works of the Law (iii. 1-14).

(1) Such had been the experience of the Galatians themselves (iii. 1-5). 1. Paul calls them "foolish," for they had deserted the solid ground of experience for mere theory. Half-playfully, half-seriously he asks "who has bewitched them?" The last clause means that when he had preached to them he had made the crucified Christ so real to them that it was as though they had actually seen Him on the Cross. 2. A plain question of fact. When they believed Paul's preaching of the cross they experienced the Spirit's presence in their hearts. It was not by the Law, but by *faith*. 3. Their present course is a backward one: deserting the "Spirit" for the "flesh," i.e., the gift of God's grace for their own weak and futile efforts, such as being circumcised, and the like. Ironically, Paul asks them if they thus expect to be perfected. 4. The reference is probably to persecutions for their faith (cf. Acts xiii. 50; xiv. 5, 19, 22) unless we read "experience" instead of "suffer," in which case the reference is to the spiritual gifts they had received by faith. 5. The same question as in ver. 2. Note how it is implied that miracles had been and were being worked by faith among the Galatians (cf. 1 Cor. xii. 9, 10; Acts xiv. 3).

(2) The same principle, *faith*, not works of the Law, underlay

the experience of Abraham (iii. 6-14, cf. the argument in Rom. iv.). 6. Quotation of Gen. xv. 6. The emphasis is on "believed." "Righteousness" means, not perfection of character, but a right relation to God. 7. Even the opponents of Paul would admit that Abraham was to be considered as a type or example, and would desire to be "sons" of Abraham. 8. Use of Gen. xii. 3; xviii. 18 which Paul took as an *anticipation* (Lightfoot) of the Gospel-offer to the Gentiles. 9. Those who "are of faith," i.e., those who, like Abraham, *believe* and *trust* the Gospel-promise without trying to add to it a doctrine of salvation through the works of the Law. 10-12 present the contrast to what has been stated in vers. 6-10. Faith *saves*, but dependence on the Law can result only in curse. Paul's argument here consists mainly in a skilful combination of several Scripture passages, Deut. xxvii. 26 (ver. 10), Hab. ii. 4 (ver. 11) and Lev. xviii. 5 (ver. 12). Simply stated, it is this: The Law demands *perfect* obedience (ver. 12) in order to live, and *curses* the one who does not so obey (ver. 10). But no one can so keep the Law, hence there is no hope in or from the Law. 13. Paul viewed the curse hanging over all men as taken by Christ for us, a view he found either required, or proved, by Deut. xxi. 23. 14. By thus lifting the curse, by taking it upon Himself, from mankind, the way was opened by Christ for *all men* to receive the "blessing of Abraham," i.e., the righteousness that comes through faith in Christ (cf. ver. 8) and the promised outpouring of the Spirit (cf. ver. 5).

2. Secondly, the superiority of the *covenant promise* to Abraham and his seed to the Law, shows the inferiority of the Law to faith (iii. 15-29).

(1) The covenant-promise, made centuries before the Law, was not set aside by the Law (iii. 15-18). 15. Paul asks them to consider how it is even with *human* agreements such as wills, or other formal documentary instruments. According to Greek custom a will, once made, was unchangeable, even by the testator; how much more the case with *God's* pledged word. 16. The main statement is the first one, so far as the argument for the greater validity of the covenant-promise is concerned. The promises referred to are probably those in Gen. xiii. 15; xvii. 8. The second half of the verse points forward to the conclusion which Paul desires to reach (cf. ver. 29). Apparently a mere

question of words, but Paul felt that the divine purpose in the promise was completely realized only in Christ. 17. The main point in the argument continuing ver. 15. The number 430 years is that of the Greek Old Testament at Ex. xii. 40. 18. The "inheritance" is the substance of the promise. Literally, this was the land of Canaan, but spiritually the higher blessings realized in Christ. Law and promise are here represented as opposite principles, one excluding the other.

(2) The real function of the Law was only secondary, to watch over man until Christ came (vers. 19-24). 19. Paul anticipates the objection: of what use then was the Law? Paul says "it was added," i.e., it was only of secondary importance. This was exactly the reverse of his pre-Christian Pharisaic view of the Law. "Because of transgressions" means, as we see from Rom. vii. 7ff, to *reveal* to man his transgressions, not cure them (cf. Rom. viii. 3). Another evidence of the Law's inferiority is that it was not given *directly*, as the promise was, but through others; by angels, according to Jewish tradition, to Moses (cf. Acts vii. 53; Heb. ii. 2). 21. The Law cannot be *against* the promise for it *fails* to do what the promise, that is the *faith* which accepts the promise, does. Paul calls this *life*; the promise "makes alive," by faith in it one comes into that living personal relation with God which Paul calls *righteousness* (cf. vers. 6 and 11, also ii. 20, 21). 23. "Faith" means the Gospel dispensation. 24. "Tutor" is an inadequate translation: "guard" or "keeper" would be better. The Law's function was not "to bring us" to Christ but simply to *stand guard* over man until Christ came.

(3) Through *faith*, according to the promise, *all* may become sons of God and heirs with Christ (25-29). 25. The "tutor" (lit. "pedagogue") had care of children (cf. 1 Cor. iv. 15). So the time came for man to pass out from under law into his liberty. 26. "All," i.e., Jews or Gentiles, with especial reference to the Galatians. By faith we give ourselves to Christ to be united to Him. As He is the *Son*, so by faith we share His Sonship (cf. Rom. viii. 14-17). Law cannot bring about any such glorious result. 27. Baptism is "into Christ," since the main thing about it is that it is a declaration of one's faith in Him, and thus in baptism one "puts on Christ," i.e., seeks to unite himself with Him as completely as possible. 28, 29. Faith in



Christ gives the promise to Abraham its world-wide scope and takes from Judaism *as such* its permanent significance.

3. In the third place, the Christian is a son, not a slave (as bondage the Law would imply) (iv. 1-v. 12).

(1) Through Christ you have, as it were, become of age and entered into your inheritance as *sons* (iv. 1-7). 1, 2. An illustration, taken from current legal practice. The emphasis is on the status of the *son* only, not on the father. 3. Beginning of the application of the illustration. Paul first speaks of the case of the Jews ("we"). Like children, they once had only the "rudiments,"—specific commands, formal observances, etc. In these respects Judaism was similar to the religions of Paganism. 4. The "fullness" of time; i.e., when the time was ripe. The pre-existence of the Son is implied, then is stated (1) His incarnation, and (2) lowly state, especially His subjection to law, thus completely identifying Himself with humanity. 5. By thus being like man He was able to save us completely, by "redeeming" us from the bondage of law (cf. iii. 13) and by enabling us to enter into a state of *sonship* ("adoption" must mean that here). 6. Paul now applies what he has said directly to the experience of the Galatians themselves. "Abba" was the Aramaic word for "father," used by the early Jewish-Christians in prayer. Apparently, the Greek-speaking Christian loved to combine the two expressions (cf. Rom. viii. 14, 15). 7 (cf. Rom. viii. 16, 17) sums up the argument of vers. 1-6.

(2) Your present conduct would bring you back to bondage (iv. 8-11). 8. The majority of the Galatian Christians had been pagans, not Jews (cf. Acts xiv. 11ff). Paul boldly says that the pagan deities were not gods, since there is but one God (cf. 1 Cor. x. 20). 9, 10. In that they now knew the one true God, Paul would remind them that this knowledge was from God, not of themselves alone (cf. 1 Cor. viii. 3). In turning to the observance of Jewish holy days, etc., as all-important, the Galatians were, Paul tells them, taking a step backward toward their former paganism. See also note on ver. 3 and cf. Col. ii. 16ff.

(3) Personal appeal. Recall how you received me and my message; how is it that you have changed your minds and now turn away from me (iv. 12-20)? 12. Paul, once a Jew, was one no longer. He had not conducted himself toward them as a Jew

by asking them to become Jews in order to become Christians (cf. Acts xiii. 46ff). He now asks them to be free as he is free. "Ye did me no wrong," i.e., you treated me well when I was with you. 13. In spite of many plausible theories, no one knows exactly to what Paul refers here. 14. "Temptation," i.e., probably to consider his sickness as one due to evil spirits, or as a divine punishment or the like and thus despise him. Or, possibly he means that he was so weak and wretched that they might well have been tempted to despise him. 15. On the contrary, they had counted his presence among them a "blessing." 16. Their change of opinion involved some hostility to Paul himself. Was this, he asks, because he once told them the truth? 17. "They" means the false teachers. Paul says bluntly that it was simply *party-spirit*, selfishness, that animated them. They would "shut out" the Galatians from the church unless they consented to be circumcised, etc. 18. Paul is mainly referring to his own solicitude for the Galatians. It was for their *good* and was *constant*, not limited to the times of his visits to them. 19, 20. Words expressive of Paul's deep affection for his converts.

(4) Allegorically, Judaism means inheritance of the slave-condition of Hagar the bondmaid, Christianity that of the *freedom* of the son of Sarah the free woman (iv. 21-v. 1). This step in Paul's argument was more convincing to his readers than it is to us. It is a specimen of that Rabbinical reasoning to which Paul was accustomed in his earlier years. By a skilful combination of Old Testament passages (cf. Gen. xxi. 2, 9; xvii. 16; Is. liv. 1; Gen. xxi. 9, 10) and familiar ideas (such as "the Jerusalem that is above") he makes out two parallel but opposite series of terms: (1) Hagar—Ishmael—the covenant at Sinai (the Law)—the material and enslaved Jerusalem. (2) Sarah—Isaac—the promise—the new or upper Jerusalem (the Christian church and its future glory). As the Christians rest on the *promise*, not on the Law, they belong with the second series. The lesson Paul wishes to draw is stated plainly in vers. 31 and v. 1 which belong together. Read v. 1 thus: with the liberty with which Christ made us free.

(5) To be circumcised is to enter into a state of slavery, to obligate one's self to keep the whole Law (v. 2-12). 2. Paul speaks very plainly. For the Galatians now to become circumcised would mean that they believed circumcision would do for

them more than Christ could. It would be, virtually, a rejection of Christ. 4. "Severed from Christ," or, more exactly, "ye are nothing as respects Christ." When one seeks to be justified solely by keeping the Law, he thereby rejects the offer of God's grace (cf. ii. 16f). 5. By "hope of righteousness" Paul means the *completed* salvation which will result from justification by faith, but which is necessarily *hoped for* until it is fully realized in the future (cf. Rom. v. 1-5). 6. Faith is fundamental, all-important, the active principle. *Love* must characterize its spirit, control its operation, give it its "way" (cf. 1 Cor. xii. 31). Note in vers. 5, 6 the three Pauline fundamentals *faith*, *hope* and *love* and cf. 1 Thess. i. 3; 1 Cor. xiii. 13; Col. i. 4, 5. 7. "Running," i.e., your Christian course. The "truth" is the Gospel they had received from Paul and believed to be true. 8. "Him that calleth you," i.e., God (cf. i. 6). 9. A current proverb. Paul used it before in 1 Cor. v. 6. The "little leaven" may mean a small amount of false teaching or a few false teachers. 10. The troubler was probably some one of recognized standing in the Jewish-Christian churches (cf. ii. 6). 11. Probably it had been hinted to the Galatians that Paul continued to advise circumcision. Their knowledge of what he had done once in the case of Timothy (cf. Acts xvi. 3) would make such a charge plausible. But it was false: (1) because the Jews still persecuted him, and (2) because he still preached the *cross* (the very opposite of preaching circumcision). 12. Indignantly sarcastic.

### Review-study of Gal. iii. 1-v. 12

Review the main points of Paul's argument as stated in the notes. Read carefully and state in your own words the thought of iii. 1-5. Explain iii. 2 in the light of 1 Cor. xii. 4-11. In arguing against a doctrine taught by those who favored Jewish forms, etc., what was the point in citing the case of Abraham (iii. 6-14)? What does *righteousness* mean in iii. 6? State in your own words the similarity between Abraham's faith and the Christian's trust in the Gospel. What is the meaning of the contrast, law over against promise, in the passage iii. 19-24? How does Paul develop the proof that the Christian is a *son*, not a *slave*, in iv. 1-v. 12? What influence of Jesus' teaching con-

cerning God is seen in iv. 6? Did Paul attach any special value to holy days, etc. (cf. iv. 8-10)? What light is thrown on Paul's experiences in Galatia by iv. 13-15? Did Paul still have confidence in the Galatians (v. 10)?

### III

**Practical advice to the Galatians touching the general character of their Christian life (v. 13-vi. 10).**

1. Christian liberty is not freedom to sin, but purity of life and loving service (v. 13-26). 13. Paul's emphasis on liberty was likely to be misunderstood. He here guards against this (cf. Rom. vi. for a more extended argument). Note the two opposite types of life here indicated, and cf. Rom. vi. 22; 1 Pet. ii. 16. 14. Cf. Lev. xix. 18; Mt. xxii. 39f; Rom. xiii. 8f; Jas. ii. 8. By *love*, the Galatians would fulfill the real spirit of the Law, which they were so anxious to obey. 15. Doctrinal discussions had perhaps led to quarrels and ill feelings among them. 16. Human nature has two sides, the higher or spiritual, and the lower or physical, i.e., the "spirit" and the "flesh." We may choose to be dominated by one or the other. God's Spirit holds communion with our spiritual nature and seeks to control that. One walks "by the Spirit" when his spiritual nature, controlled by God's Spirit, controls his own life. 17. Everyone knows how true these words are. 18. When one is *led* by the Spirit the controlling force is *within* him,—God's Spirit influencing his spirit. Such an one has no concern with the Law; it does not control him and he more than fulfills all that is good in it. 19-23. Explanatory of ver. 18. 24. See note on ii. 20. 25. The inner principle and the outer walk should correspond.

2. The Christian duty of mutual helpfulness (vi. 1-6). 1. By the word "brethren" Paul indicates the brotherly spirit that should always dominate a Christian church. "Overtaken"; better "surprised" or "detected." *Restoration*, not criticism, should be the result aimed at (cf. 2 Cor. ii. 5-11; 2 Thess. iii. 14, 15). 2. The "law of Christ" is the ideal of life revealed in Christ's life and teachings and impressed on the heart of the believer ever impelling him to realize it. 3, 4. A caution against undue self-praise and

glorification, so likely to occur where one seeks to advise or help another. 5. "Burden" means "responsibility"; no one can transfer his own responsibility to another. In ver. 3 "burdens" refer to the sorrows and misfortunes that can be lightened by another's sympathy and help. 6. This verse is usually connected with the following verses and understood to be a general direction to the Galatians to see that their teachers were duly provided for. But it may mean "let teacher and taught *share together* in all that is good."

3. The sower will surely reap what he sows (vi. 7-10). 7. The admonition is to be applied to the whole round of conduct. God is not "to be sneered at" but His eternal moral principles *must* be reckoned with. 8. If one makes the "flesh," his lower nature, dominant, the final outcome is certain and inevitable; just so if the spiritual side is given the preference. There is no accident or chance about it.

Concluding section, in the Apostle's own hand (vi. 11-17). He returns to the main thought he had in mind when he began the letter and earnestly warns his readers against those who would take away their liberty in the Gospel. 11. Possibly the whole letter was written by Paul himself. More probably, here he ceased dictating and wrote plainly for the sake of emphasis. 12. Paul is sure that the Judaizing Christians who advocate circumcision do so from unworthy motives; thereby they escape persecution by the Jews, to whom the preaching of the cross was especially hateful. 13. Cf. ii. 15ff; iii. 10, 21. Since no one can perfectly keep the Law, insistence on circumcision was mere glorying in the flesh. 14. Cf. ii. 20f. 15. Cf. v. 6. *Character*, the "new creature," not a rite, is the all-important thing (cf. 2 Cor. v. 17, also 1 Cor. vii. 19). 16. By "this rule" the life according to the Spirit, the life of *faith*, is meant. 17. Paul has no desire to pursue the subject further. He is through. Personally he knows what his relation to Christ is. He is marked as Christ's by the scars of wounds inflicted on him in persecution. 18. A brief, but sincere, conclusion.

### Review-study

Review the main points of the practical section (v. 13-vi. 10) as indicated in the notes. Restate in your own words the thought

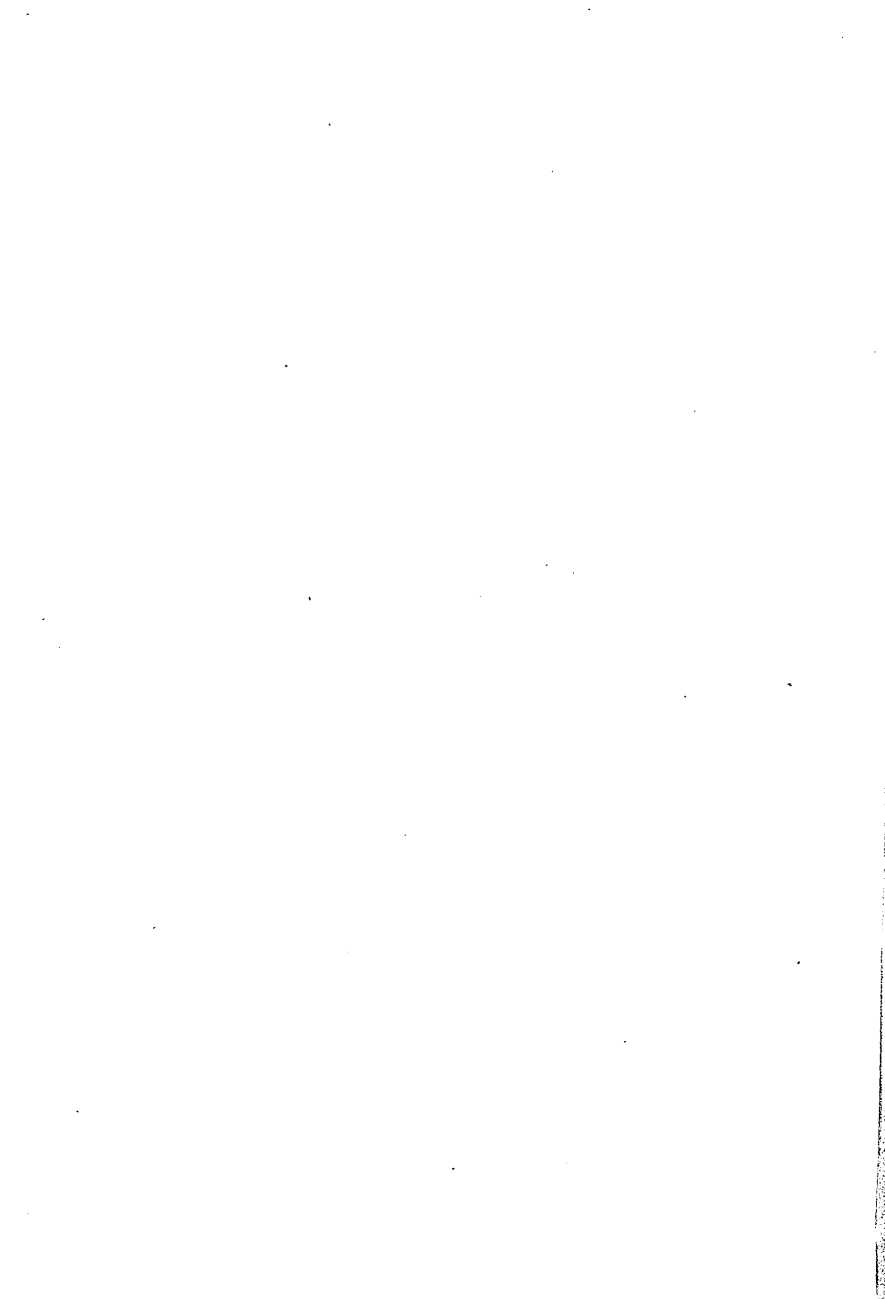
of v. 13-26. Apply the principle stated in v. 16, 17 to life as you find it today. State the difference between verses 2 and 5 of ch. vi. State in your own words and apply to life-problems of today the principle laid down in vi. 7.

Gather up now in as few words as possible, the main ideas of the whole Epistle. State in a brief paragraph the main points of the first part. Do the same with the second and third parts. How important was the issue at stake (see the Introduction, section 3)? How does Paul's argument touch problems and views concerning Christian doctrine and life *today*? What, according to this Epistle, is the fundamental, unchangeable, and *necessary* thing in Christian experience?



THE EPISTLES TO THE COLOSSIANS, TO PHILE-  
MON AND TO THE PHILIPPIANS





## COLOSSIANS, PHILEMON, and PHILIPPIANS

These Epistles belong to the third group of Paul's Epistles written during his first imprisonment at Rome, 59-61 A. D.

### Introductory—Paul in Rome

Paul arrived in Rome, not, as he had hoped when he wrote Romans, with perfect freedom to stay there as long as seemed best and then go on to Spain (cf. Rom. xv. 22-28), but as a prisoner, accused of a capital crime by the Jews, from which charge he believed he could be cleared only by appealing to the Emperor. His appeal, which was made after the vexatious delay of his case for two years (56-58 A. D.) by Felix, the Roman governor of Judæa (Acts xxiv. 27), was approved by Porcius Festus, Felix's successor (Acts xxv. 1-12), but it was not until the next spring (owing to the shipwreck and winter's delay at Malta) that Paul arrived at Rome, about three years after writing his letter to the Roman church.

Of the particulars of Paul's experiences in Rome during the two years pending his hearing and acquittal by the Emperor, little is known. On his arrival he was cordially welcomed by members of the Roman church (Acts xxviii. 15). His imprisonment was not severe, though the chain by which he was bound to the soldier who guarded him was a constant reminder of the fact that he was a prisoner (cf. Acts xxviii. 16, 30, 31; Col. iv. 3, 18; Eph. vi. 20).

Under these circumstances it was impossible for Paul to take a leading part in the guidance of the church at Rome. Widely scattered as the Christians of the city were, he had little opportunity to see any but those who might visit him at his place of imprisonment. Doubtless he exerted a great influence over many individuals. But he was in no sense the head or bishop of the Roman church. His opportunities for evangelistic labors were also quite limited, restricted mainly to persons more nearly connected with the military or governmental circles (cf. Col. iv. 3; Phil. i. 12ff).

## Colossians

During these years in Rome Paul remembered with affectionate interest and solicitude his churches in Asia Minor, Macedonia and Greece, for which he had labored so faithfully for seven years. Messengers came and went between the Apostle and his spiritual children. It is likely that we know of only a small part of this intercourse. What we know is therefore not only suggestive, but most precious.

Of the four letters remaining to us of Paul's correspondence at this period, three, Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians, are closely related. They were probably written earlier than Philipians and thus form a group by themselves.

### I. THE EPISTLES TO THE COLOSSIANS AND PHILEMON

When Paul wrote these letters he had about him in Rome a little circle of intimate disciples and fellow-workers, some of whose names we know. Among them were Timothy (Col. i. 1), Tychicus (iv. 7), Aristarchus (iv. 10, cf. Acts xx. 4), Mark, Jesus Justus, Luke, and Demas (iv. 10-14), and, from Colossæ, Epaphras and Onesimus. Of these Tychicus, whose home was, possibly, Ephesus (cf. Acts xx. 4), was about to visit the East, probably as Paul's representative (Col. iv. 7, 8; Eph. vi. 21, 22). Mark, also, was about to make a journey which might bring him by Colossæ. Epaphras was apparently the evangelist through whose labors the churches of Colossæ and the neighborhood had been founded. He had come to Rome to inform Paul of conditions in Colossæ and Paul was keeping him with him for a while (Col. i. 7; iv. 12f). Onesimus was Philemon's runaway slave whom Paul had converted in Rome and was about to send back to his master (Col. iv. 9; Phmn. ver. 10ff).

Turning from the circle in Rome we notice other individuals mentioned who were in the East, in Colossæ and Laodicea; Nymphas (Col. iv. 15), Philemon and his wife Apphia, and Archippus (Phmn. ver. 2; Col. iv. 17).

Thus the interests of this group of letters are not merely formal, ecclesiastical, or doctrinal, but personal, affectionate, Christian. This personal note is especially noticeable in Colos-

## Colossians

sians and Philemon. Its absence from Ephesians is best explained on the supposition that Ephesians was a circular letter, intended to go the rounds of a number of churches, and therefore all personal references except the one to Tychicus, its bearer (Ephesians vi. 21f), were out of place. Of these three letters, Colossians and Ephesians are very closely related, in many places being almost identical in language. Colossians may be considered a special message to a limited circle (the Colossian and Laodicean churches, cf. Col. iv. 16), while Ephesians was a more general message to a larger circle of churches. Philemon easily explains itself as a purely personal letter.

Paul was led to write Colossians and Ephesians mainly because of the reports that had come to him, especially through Epaphras of Colossæ, of the recent spread of certain doctrines in the churches of Asia Minor which he considered dangerous to the Christian faith. What these were the study of the Epistles will show. While Paul was personally acquainted with but few, if any, of the churches in the interior of western Asia Minor, some of them had been founded, doubtless, by his disciples. During his long stay in Ephesus, Paul had sown the seeds of the Gospel throughout the Province of Asia of which Ephesus was the capital. He thus felt justified in writing as an apostle to churches of Asia not founded by his own labors. Such were the three churches of Colossæ, Laodicea and Hierapolis (cf. Col. iv. 13), all of which are more or less directly addressed in the Epistles to the Colossians and Ephesians.

## THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

### Introduction

In addition to what has been stated regarding the group of three Epistles of which Colossians is one, a few words of special introduction to this Epistle are necessary.

The town of Colossæ was situated in the valley of the Lycus, a tributary of the Meander, one of the large rivers of western Asia Minor. The city was distant about one hundred miles from the sea and about twenty miles from the junction of the Lycus and the Meander. It was on the great trade-route leading from

Ephesus to the Euphrates. About ten miles to the west of Colossæ lay Laodicea on the same road, while opposite Laodicea, on the north side of the valley, was Hierapolis. In the days of Paul these were all flourishing commercial communities. In addition to the main Gentile population (Phrygian and Greek) these cities contained a large and important Jewish element. It is likely, therefore, that the Christian churches located here counted in their membership some, if not many, who were of Jewish origin.

Outline of the Epistle. Paul did not write this Epistle as a formal treatise, but as a *letter*. Out of a great love and solicitude for those Christians of the Lycus Valley, he wrote to help them to a better knowledge of Christianity. The *personal* character of the letter is evident throughout, and this is why it does not easily unfold as a formal discussion. In a general way it can be outlined as follows:

The *Introductory* part (i. 1-13), at the close of which, almost imperceptibly, Paul begins an extended statement of the *Nature and Work of Christ* (i. 14-ii. 3). Then he discusses and warns them against the *false teachings* by which they were threatened (ii. 4-23). This is followed by a number of earnest *exhortations to live up to* the doctrines of the faith (iii. 1-iv. 6), after which *personal matters*, salutations, etc., close the letter (iv. 7-18).

### Commentary

#### 1. The Introductory Part, i. 1-13.

(1) The Epistolary Introduction (i. 1-2), comprising the signature, address, and salutation. 1. Paul writes to them as an *apostle*, Timothy joins simply as a *brother*. Timothy was also in Rome with Paul when later he wrote Philippians. He probably remained with the Apostle throughout his first imprisonment in Rome. 2. Cf. close of note on 1 Thess. i. 1.

(2) Thanksgiving (i. 3-8), cf. 1 Thess i. 2. 3. It would be better to connect "always" with "we give thanks," thus: we always give thanks whenever we pray for you. Paul's prayers for the churches and for individuals were frequent and earnest. 4, 5. "Having heard," i.e., from Epaphras (cf. v. 8). Notice the three

fundamental terms, *faith*, *love* and *hope*, in this description of the Christianity which the Apostle has heard that the Colossians possessed (cf. 1 Thess. i. 3; 1 Cor. xiii. 13). Hope (the hope of future blessedness) is viewed here as furnishing a great, vital motive to faith and love; *because of* the hope, their faith and love were strong and ardent. This *hope* was a most important element in the teaching of the early church, an essential part of the Gospel. The Colossians had heard of it when they first heard the Gospel message. 6. Paul here applies the knowledge he has gained from many years' experience. The true Gospel *always and everywhere bears fruit* (in lives redeemed from bondage to sin, purified, strengthened, ennobled) and *increases* (affects an ever enlarging number). So it was also in Colossæ. "The grace of God": the message of God's forgiving grace is the heart of the Gospel. 7. Epaphras was, evidently, the one to whom the Colossians owed their knowledge of the Gospel. He was Christ's faithful "minister," Paul says, "on *our* behalf." Possibly, Epaphras, a native of Colossæ, had been converted by Paul in Ephesus and then sent by the Apostle to evangelize his native city. 8. Now Epaphras had come to Rome to report to Paul the favorable result of his mission.

(3) Prayer that the Colossians may more fully appreciate and practice the truths revealed in the Gospel (i. 9-13). 9. The fullness of Christian experience is not attained *at once*. Consequently, Paul prays (1) that their *knowledge* (the word means *profound, thorough* knowledge) of God's *will* may be increased. It is His will as that to which our lives must conform that is meant. Such knowledge is *spiritual*, and for it we need the Spirit's illumination. 10. Paul prays (2) that their daily walk may be worthy of the Lord and pleasing *to Him*. The profounder the knowledge (v. 9) the more perfect the life-conduct should be. Also, the better the life, the more perfect the knowledge will be (the last clause of the verse). To Paul, doctrine and life must not be separated. 11. The Apostle prays (3) that they may be *strengthened* with the divine strength, which His glory as revealed in Christ shows to exist in Him, to *endure* patiently and joyfully the trials of life. 12, 13. And, finally, Paul prays (4) that they may be duly thankful for the great and wonderful salvation which has come to them.

## 2. The Person and Work of Christ (i. 14-ii. 3).

The last words in ver. 13, "the Son of His love," enabled Paul easily to pass to an extended statement of his doctrine of Christ. In this he throws the main emphasis, first, on Christ's *headship* or pre-eminence over all creation and the church (i. 14-19) and, second, on His *reconciling* or redemptive work (i. 20-23). He then speaks of His own efforts to bring this truth to the Gentiles and make it regnant in their lives (i. 24-ii. 3). 14. In ver. 13 two spheres or realms of moral and spiritual existence are spoken of: the "power of darkness" and "the Kingdom of the Son of His love." Of the latter, Christ, the beloved Son of God, is the head. How and why, Paul proceeds to show. In this and the following verse it is probable that Paul was silently opposing certain false teachings regarding Christ. The supreme fact about Christ for faith is that in Him we have our *redemption* (cf. Eph. i. 7), and this redemption is, primarily, the *forgiveness of sin*, not initiation into mystic knowledge, etc., as was perhaps claimed by the false teachings. Many of the terms used in the following passage (vers. 15-19) were in current use in Jewish and other theological speculations. Paul finds it convenient to take them and apply them to Christ, thus showing that only as used of *Him* do such terms have a real meaning. 15. It is of Christ the *Son of God* that these assertions are made. His Sonship is assumed as accepted. "Image," i.e., "manifestation." God is not visible or known directly by us. Through *His Son* He can be known (cf. Jn. i. 18; xiv. 9). As the "firstborn" the Son is *first in time*, prior to the creation, and, especially, the *heir* and therefore has the sovereign rights. 16, 17. Paul next declares of the Son, that *in, through, and to* Him all things were created. Cf. the Old Testament statement about Wisdom, Pr. viii. 22-31. Paul does not and would not have said that the *Father* was not the Creator. The Son and He alone is the agent or medium between the Father and His world and, with the Father, He is the *end* for and to which all things are (cf. Jn. i. 1-3). Thus no intermediary beings, if such exist (Paul does not assert this or deny it), thrones, lordships, etc. (angelic beings, cf. Eph. i. 21), are of any significance whatever. 18. The supreme position of the Son over Creation makes inevitable His supremacy over the church (of which, viewed as an organism, a

*body*, He is the *head*). He is its "beginning," i.e., its origin and source, especially in virtue of His resurrection (cf. Eph. i. 22f). 19. Such was *God's* sovereign pleasure, that the *fulness* of Divine perfection should dwell in His Son (cf. Mk. i. 11).

The redemptive work of the Son (i. 20-23). 20. Thus the Son, and only He, is the One through whom the work of redemption can be accomplished. Here, as in 2 Cor. v. 19, Paul designates the redemptive work as *reconciliation*, *God's own act* of bringing about peace and good-will between the world and Himself. God's Son did this "through the blood of His cross," when the one all-sufficient atonement for sin was made. 21. Man's hostility to God, not God's enmity to man, is what needs to be changed. Paul *knew* how great is the alienation from God that exists in the heathen soul, and in every soul ignorant of Christ. He is here writing to those who also knew how much *they* had been changed. 22. The great purpose of God's reconciling work in Christ is that *righteous and holy characters* may be possible, approved by God and able to live "before Him," here and hereafter. Note the emphasis on the *moral* aspect, rather than on the abstract or mystic. 23. Only by continuing steadfast in the faith as *they had received it*, could the Colossians attain unto the goal. Epaphras had preached the genuine Gospel, the one and only universal Gospel on which the apostolic church was based, and which Paul himself taught and lived.

The more personal section (i. 24-ii. 3), still emphasizing the supremacy of Christ. 24. "For your sake," i.e., for you, as Gentiles, or as members of Christ's body, the church. The sufferings of Christ were perfect as far as His *atoning* work was involved, but they did not exhaust all the sufferings necessary in order that the Gospel may be known far and wide. His followers, Paul, and we also, must "fill up" or complete those sufferings for others. 26, 27. The Gospel was eternally in God's plan, though only *made known* in that age in which Paul lived. The "mystery" (truth once hid but now disclosed) was the offer of God's grace to the *Gentiles* (cf. Eph. iii. 2-7), and its *aim* was *personal*, *Christ regnant* in each soul. 28, 29. To this great end Paul labored incessantly. ii. 1. Even for them, and the brethren of the nearby church of Laodicea (see the Introductory note, p. 112) and other churches to whom he had never ministered personally, Paul labored in prayer and otherwise most earnestly.



2, 3. What Paul labored for is again stated more explicitly: (1) that they might be encouraged and strengthened; (2) that they might more fully understand the truth revealed in Christ, in *whom* (and not in any new teachings about angels, powers, etc.) all true spiritual knowledge is contained.

3. Warning against the false teachings then threatening the faith (ii. 4-23).

(1) Plea that they yield to no persuasions that would turn them from that devotion to Christ alone, which they have been taught (4-7). 4. The advocates of the new teachings evidently spoke very persuasively. It is often so. 5. Though absent, Paul's interest in them is keen. He would not see the good results already gained ruined by false doctrine. 6, 7. In Jesus, accepted as *Christ* and *Lord* (cf. Acts ii. 36), there is the one only *way*, *source*, and *foundation* of the Christian's life.

(2) Warning against being *deceived* as to the character of the new teachings, since *Christ alone* is the all-sufficient *base* and center of faith (8-15). 8. "Maketh spoil," i.e., carry you off as spoil or prey. The new teachings are condemned as of purely *human* origin, only empty *speculations*, making great pretence to wisdom, but of no value whatever. Certain modern teachings might be similarly condemned. 9, 10. Cf. i. 19. In Him in Whom all divine perfection dwells we attain our full and perfect life. That life is not a theory or speculation, it was actually realized in human form in Christ (the meaning of "bodily"). 11, 12. Through faith in Him, typified and sealed by His baptism (cf. Rom. vi. 3f) the Christian actually experiences the new life, supported by God's power, and destined to culminate in resurrection as it did in the case of Christ. 13, 14. The new life starts from the *forgiveness of sin*, made possible by Christ's atonement on the cross, when He triumphed completely over sin. By the "bond" the sentence of the Law against sin is meant. Christ canceled this, as it were, on the cross. 15. The word "triumphing," is used, as in 2 Cor. ii. 14, as suggestive of a Roman triumph when a victorious general entered the city of Rome at the head of his army with its train of captives and spoils. Here the "principalities" and "powers" are probably those intermediary beings or agencies of which the new teachings made much. Paul says simply: Christ triumphed over them *all*. See note on i. 16.

(3) Specific mention of some of the false teachings against which he warns them (16-23). First, he singles out two types and briefly condemns them (16, 17 and 18, 19) and then *both* are shown to be contrary to Christian principles and altogether vain and useless (20-23).

16, 17. The new teachings insisted on certain *formal* observances, on abstinence from some kinds of food or drink, and on the keeping holy of certain days, as being *necessary* and *all-important* (cf. Gal. iv. 10). Paul says briefly: these are but the *shadow*; the real body, the substance represented by the shadow, is of *Christ*, i.e., it is exemplified perfectly in Him. Hence, personal devotion to Him will produce the right kind of life. 18, 19. So the substitution of angels and other intermediary beings is foolish. It may seem to savor of humility, but really the whole doctrine rests on imaginary visions. Christ alone is the head and source of all spiritual life for His Church. 20-23. All *trust* in formal observances is a return to a type of religious life from which Christ delivered us. A true faith in Him trusts in Him alone and does not lean on forms and observances which, after all, are *powerless*.

4. Exhortations to *live* in accordance with their Christian faith (iii. 1-4; vi.).

(1) The *heavenly* life revealed in Christ must be their model and aim (iii. 1-4). 1. "If then ye were raised": the Christian's faith, which he professes at baptism, is in Christ *raised and glorified*. He unites himself by faith with his glorified Redeemer. Consequently, the supreme direction and aim of his life must be the heavenly life. Cf. Mt. vi. 20. 2. The Christian should not only "seek," but "set his mind on" (lit. "think") the things that make up the heavenly life, as these have been revealed in Christ. 3. Cf. Rom. vi. 2-4. The Christian, when he puts his faith in Christ, dies to the world and sin; but in the same act he finds his true life in Christ who is now unseen or hidden from the world. 4. The reference is to the Parousia, cf. 1 Thess. iv. 13ff; 2 Thess. i. 7; ii. 1-12.

(2) They must die to the old life of sin, separate themselves entirely from it (iii. 5-11). 5. The "therefore" connects the exhortation with the principle stated in ii. 20 and iii. 3, i.e., the

Christian has *died*, has separated forever from certain ways of thought and conduct. The Apostle's language is strong: "put to death." "Members" is used briefly for the *uses* to which the body may be put. Cf. Rom. vi. 13, 19. Covetousness is called idolatry, perhaps because it amounts practically to the service and worship of the material world. Cf. Mt. vi. 24. See also Eph. v. 5. 6. Cf. Eph. v. 6, and note on Rom. i. 18. 7. Paul often reminds his Gentile readers of the contrast between their former sinful lives and their present better Christian way of life. The test of their faith was found in its fruits. Apparently, Paul was sure that the new false teachings had no such moral power and effects as were produced by simple faith in Christ alone. 9, 10. Paul frequently uses the figure of putting garments off and on to illustrate the change from the old life without Christ to the new life controlled and guided by Him and consecrated to Him (cf. 1 Thess. v. 8; Gal. iii. 27; Rom. xiii. 12). The "new man" is described as "being renewed constantly" (cf. 2 Cor. iv. 16) unto (perfect) knowledge," i.e., of God's will and the life that accords with it, until man finally attains full God-likeness of character. 11. The "new" man is *always* dependent on Christ, modeled after Him, and filled with His spirit. In Christ, then, the old distinctions, that hold so strongly in the world as it is, pass away and the true unity and brotherhood of mankind is realized.

(3) Having "put off" the old, and "put on" the new, they are urged to do this completely and thoroughly, being controlled in every respect by the new life in Christ (iii. 12-17). The first part of this admonition (vers. 12-15) has to do especially with the attitude and bearing of Christians towards one another. 12. "God's elect, holy, beloved": thus Paul grounds the injunction. To such a lofty height does he ask them to raise their thoughts regarding themselves, but only in order to realize how they must respond to God's approach to them in His grace. 14. Note the emphasis on love as the all-inclusive virtue. Cf. 1 Cor. xiii.; Rom. xiii. 8; Gal. v. 14. 15. The "peace of Christ" is the peace that is demanded and inspired by Christ, the *one* example and the *one* ruler of Christians. Cf. Jn. xiv. 27. This peace of Christ is to "rule," i.e., decide as an umpire, or arbitrate. "Be ye thankful": the thankful spirit would also

conduce to peace and good-will. 16, 17. Three comprehensive recommendations looking to the same end, the complete supremacy of the new life in Christ. "The word of Christ"; the truth taught by Christ or revealed by His spirit. "In the name of the Lord Jesus," not merely formally, but "in the spirit of those who bear His name" (Abbott).

(4) Special recommendations (iii. 18-iv. 6).

(a) Regarding relations in the home (iii. 18-iv. 1).

18, 19. To wives and husbands Paul emphasizes the *mutual* obligation, which is to be fulfilled "in the Lord." Cf. the more elaborate directions in Eph. v. 22ff. 20, 21. To children and parents. Paul thinks of the children in Christian homes as inspired by Christian ideals. The advice in ver. 21 shows true insight into the workings of the child-mind. iii. 23-iv. 1. To servants (slaves) and masters. Perhaps Paul was led to lay special emphasis on this because of his recent experience with Onesimus, Philemon's runaway slave (see notes on Philemon).

In this advice to slaves Paul insists especially on three points: first, that they must show the strictest fidelity and conscientiousness in the service of their masters. Second, a sense of their life and work as *all* in the service of their real master Christ. Third, that their being slaves will not excuse them, in God's sight, for wrongdoing (ver. 25). Note that masters are reminded that it is not only justice, but *equity* that they must regard in their relations to their slaves.

(b) Exhortation to prayer, both for themselves and for him and his companions (iv. 2-4). 3, 4. In spite of his imprisonment Paul wishes to make the best use of every opportunity to preach the Gospel. He asks their prayers both for such opportunities and that he may be enabled to make the best use of them (cf. Eph. vi. 19, 20).

(c) Exhortation to be careful of their conduct toward the unconverted (iv. 5, 6). 5. "Redeeming the time": practically equivalent to "making use of every opportunity." 6. The word "seasoned with salt" is the word that has in it the quality to save from corruption; the wholesome, purifying word of Christian truth.

(5) Personal and concluding section (v. 7-18). For the persons mentioned in vers. 7-14 see the Introduction (p. 110).

For Onesimus, see notes on Philemon (p. 121). 12. Epaphras was probably a citizen of Colossæ: He was, apparently, quite anxious over the condition of the church there. 13. The churches of Laodicea and Hierapolis were evidently in close fellowship with that of Colossæ. 14. Nymphas was probably a leading member of the church of Laodicea and at his house were held the meetings of the church. 15. Note the importance Paul attaches to his letters. 17. Archippus was perhaps the son of Philemon (cf. Phmn. ii.). He evidently held some important church office, but we do not know what it was. It is possible that he resided at Laodicea and not at Colossæ. 18. Paul takes the pen from his amanuensis for the closing salutation, prayer (very personal and pathetic) and brief benediction.

### THE EPISTLE TO PHILEMON

This beautiful little letter to a prominent member of the church of Colossæ was sent at the same time that Paul sent the longer letter to the church. Tychicus was the bearer of the letter, and Onesimus, who accompanied him (Col. iv. 9), carried the message concerning himself to his former master.

The letter is altogether of a private character, the one surviving example of many such that the Apostle must have written.

All that we know of Philemon and Onesimus (except the incidental mention in Col. iv. 9) and of the circumstances giving rise to the letter is found only in this letter.

Philemon, a citizen of Colossæ, had been converted by Paul himself (ver. 19), probably at Ephesus. He had had some fellowship with Paul in evangelistic work and had endeared himself to the Apostle, who addresses him as "beloved and fellow worker" (ver. 1). The home of Philemon in Colossæ became a center of Christian activity and influence. It was one of the meeting places (perhaps the only one) of the church of Colossæ (ver. 2). Apphia, his wife, and Archippus (his son?) seem to have been known to Paul personally and may have been with him when he first met the Apostle.

All that Paul had heard of Philemon since had but deepened

## Philemon

his regard and affection for his convert. His helpful sympathy and generous hospitality, of which Paul had learned, led the Apostle to pray fervently that such deeds of love would only serve to bring about a more perfect experience of all the good there is in Christ (vers. 4-7).

Among Philemon's slaves was a certain Onesimus, who had stolen some of his master's money or goods and had then run away. At last he found himself in Rome. Here, in some way, Paul had got into contact with him and converted him. It was a thorough conversion and the runaway thief became a useful and beloved helper of the Apostle (vers. 10, 11). Paul would gladly have kept Onesimus with him but he knew that, according to Roman law, Onesimus was Philemon's property and should be returned to his master. Paul was no revolutionist and felt that the law must be obeyed. He knew also that Philemon could deal with Onesimus as he pleased, put him to death if he saw fit,—such was the law.

In the appeal Paul makes to Philemon, he says not a word about the law regarding slavery being right or wrong, or, if wrong, that it should be disobeyed. On the contrary, he admits Philemon's legal rights, but with wonderful and charming courtesy and tact he places the whole question on the higher plane of Christian brotherhood and love. He will not even command the kind treatment of Onesimus by Philemon as a duty, he simply requests it as a favor, but in such a way that the *brotherly* character of such an act was made clear (cf. ver. 16). Further, he promises to pay any sum that the slave may owe his master, hinting, however, that Philemon owes him (Paul) a greater debt (his conversion). In such splendid confidence in the genuineness of Philemon's Christian character Paul wrote this letter and sent it by the hand of Onesimus himself. We may be sure that the Apostle's confidence was not misplaced.

The charm of this letter is imperishable. It is one of the great letters in the private correspondence of the ages. It reveals Paul's heart, it shows his high sense of honor, his strict regard for law and at the same time the love and sympathy that are greater than law. If the *spirit* of this letter could be made to rule in the conduct of Christians toward each other, how much brighter and better the world would be!

A few comments are subjoined.

1. The names Philemon and Apphia were both common Phrygian names. Presumably both persons were of native Phrygian descent. 7. Note the appeal in the word "brother." Cf. the same thing in ver. 20. 8, 9. Paul felt that he could rightly enjoy or command, but for *love's* sake he preferred to beseech. "Aged" might read "ambassador," cf. Eph. vi. 20. 10. Note how Paul speaks of the conversion of Onesimus. 15, 16. Note the delicacy and courtesy of the suggestions. 20. Evidently Paul was expecting to be released soon but this expectation may not have been realized.

### Review-study of Colossians and Philemon

When and how did Paul come to be in Rome? What can you say of Paul's experiences during his first Roman imprisonment? What letters of Paul remain to us from this period? Who were Tychicus and Epaphras? Where was Colossæ? What two towns are mentioned as closely related to it? Where were these?

What was the main reason why Paul wrote Colossians and Ephesians? Make a detailed outline of the Epistle to the Colossians.

Describe the character of the religious life and faith Paul loved to see manifested in a Christian church according to Colossians i. 4-6. What was the scope of Paul's prayer in i. 9-13? State as simply as possible the place Paul gives Christ in the whole order of the universe and why. Why did Paul feel that it was necessary to emphasize these truths in this letter? What *main* truth was he seeking to set forth? What is the doctrine of reconciliation taught in i. 20-22? What false teachings does Paul warn against in ii. 4-23? Are any similar teachings current today? How did Paul try to meet and overthrow false doctrine? State in your own words, and as touching your own life, the thought of iii. 1-4 and iii. 5-11. How might Paul's advice in iii. 23-iv. 1 be applied to controversies of today?

Who was Philemon? Onesimus? Pick out the expressions in Philemon showing Paul's courtesy and tact. Did Paul approve of slavery?

## II. THE EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS

### Introduction

This Epistle was written at Rome, probably near the end of Paul's first imprisonment (i.e., about 61 A. D.).

The situation disclosed in Philippians is somewhat different from that implied in Colossians, Philemon and Ephesians. The opportunity for preaching, for which he was praying when he wrote Colossians and Ephesians (Col. iv. 3f; Eph. vi. 19f), came, and not only by Paul and his circle of fellow workers, but by others the preaching of the Gospel was being vigorously carried on in Rome (cf. i. 12ff).

As for Paul himself, at last his case had come, or was about to come, to trial. The imperial court often postponed cases for long periods. From what Paul had learned, he was now quite confident of acquittal (i. 7, 12-26; ii. 24), and was already planning his future movements.

The church of Philippi was the oldest of Paul's churches in Europe. It had been founded on his Second Missionary Journey about 50 A. D. (see Acts xvi. 12-40). Since that time he had revisited it at least twice, in the fall of 55 A. D., and in the spring of 56 A. D., on his way to and from Corinth previous to his last visit to Jerusalem (Acts xx. 1, 2; 2 Cor. ii. 13; Acts xx. 3-6). He had also kept in close touch with this church by means of messengers.

The relations of Paul to his Philippiān church seem to have been exceptionally close, affectionate and free from all disturbing features. Soon after the church was founded it had ministered liberally to the Apostle's financial needs (iv. 10-20). Later it had contributed willingly and with extraordinary generosity to the collection for the Jerusalem Christians (2 Cor. viii. 1ff). And now, out of their love for Paul, they had recently sent a gift to him through Epaphroditus, with a message of anxious solicitude for his safety and the work of the Gospel in Rome (iv. 10-18).

While Epaphroditus was in Rome he was taken sick and came near dying. Word of his sickness had reached Philippi and naturally had caused anxiety there (ii. 26ff).



## Philippians

Under such circumstances Paul wrote this letter. Epaphroditus, having recovered, was about to return to Philippi, and Paul used the opportunity to send his beloved church this message. He wished to show them his deep gratitude for their continued interest in him and to inform them of his welfare and plans. The letter is written in an affectionate, confidential tone. In only one respect does he indicate that their peace or welfare is seriously threatened. There was some lack of perfect unity among them. This he urges them to overcome by striving to become more perfectly conformed to Christ.

### Outline of the Epistle

Epistolary signature, address, and greeting (i. 1, 2).

1. Thanksgiving and Prayer (i. 3-11).
2. Information (i. 12-26).
  - (1) Regarding the progress of Gospel-preaching in Rome in connection with his imprisonment (i. 12-18).
  - (2) Regarding his own feelings and expectations in the circumstances (i. 19-26).
3. Exhortations (i. 27-ii. 18).
  - (1) To consistency and steadfastness (i. 27-30).
  - (2) To unity and humility, after the example of Christ (ii. 1-11).
  - (3) Earnest appeal to them, as his own disciples and in view of his possible martyrdom, to apply themselves most seriously to their own salvation (ii. 12-18).
4. Information concerning plans of Timothy and Epaphroditus (ii. 19-30).
  - (1) Timothy, likely to visit them, is commended as sincere and unselfish. Paul hopes to follow him soon (ii. 19-24).
  - (2) Epaphroditus, whose sickness caused them anxiety, is sent back to them (with this letter) to comfort and cheer them (ii. 25-30).

5. Warning against false teachings (iii. 1-iv. 1).

(1) Against the Judaizing doctrines so prevalent then. This warning is enforced by citing his own experience as of one who has left Judaism behind (iii. 1-16).

(2) Against other false teaching contrary to the true spirit of Christian purity and to the high heavenly destiny of the Christian himself (iii. 17-iv. 1).

6. Concluding exhortations (iv. 2-9).

(1) Personal (iv. 2, 3).

(2) General (iv. 4-9).

7. Grateful acknowledgment of their generous remembrance of him both formerly and more recently through Epaphroditus (iv. 10-19).

Doxology, salutation and benediction (iv. 20-23).

### Commentary

i. 1, 2. The epistolary opening is in the form usual with Paul (cf. 1 Thess. i. 1). Timothy is still with Paul (cf. Col. i. 1). He was well known to the Philippians, having been with Paul on his first visit to Philippi (Acts xvi.) and had visited the church several times since. Philippi had been founded by Philip of Macedonia (359-336 B. C.). Here, in 42 B. C., the fate of the Roman republic was sealed by the defeat of Brutus and Cassius by Antony and Octavian. The latter, when emperor, made Philippi a Roman colony, or residence of Roman veterans. "Bishops and deacons": local church officials. The terms must not be understood in the fixed ecclesiastical sense they afterwards acquired.

1. Thanksgiving and Prayer (i. 3-11).

3, 4. As usual, Paul mentions his constant remembrance of them in his prayers. His churches were ever on his heart.

5. From the start, this church had been faithful and consistent, always ready to coöperate with Paul in the labor of the Gospel. For this he is profoundly grateful. 6. "A good work":

i.e., the work of grace in their hearts. 7. "It is right": i.e., "I am justified" in so thinking. No one but Paul could have written what follows, as the *reason* for his confidence regarding them (see ver. 6). They are "in his heart," i.e., in his thoughts as sharing with him his experiences, and as he, both in his bonds and in the privilege given him to defend and "confirm" (or "vindicate the rights of") the Gospel, was sustained by God's grace, so they, being so intimate with him, share the same grace. Paul emphasized the *grace*, not the sufferings. 8-11. Paul's beautifully worded prayer for his beloved church. He feels that he shares something of his Master's tender love for them. He prays that their *love* may be perfected. It was love, the crowning virtue and grace, that was especially conspicuous in that church.

## 2. Information (i. 12-26).

(1) The state of the Gospel in Rome (i. 12-18).

12, 13. In general, the Gospel is making rapid progress. "Manifest in Christ": i.e., "have become a testimony to Christ." "The prætorian guard": i.e., the soldiers of the imperial guard who from time to time kept watch over Paul. Through these a knowledge of Paul and his Gospel was spread far and wide. 14. If, as vers. 12, 13 seem to imply, it was generally felt that a favorable decision of Paul's case was likely, then many would be encouraged to preach the Gospel boldly. 15-17. Evidently there were many minor divisions or factions in the church at Rome. Some seem even to have been hostile to Paul—perhaps the extreme Judaistic party. 18. A good evidence of Paul's broad tolerance. So long as *Christ* was preached, Paul cared little how he himself was estimated.

(2) Regarding his own feelings and expectations (i. 19-26).

19. "This" refers to the circumstances in which he was placed, his trials and sufferings, etc. "Salvation": i.e., his true welfare, whether that be realized in his release or in his execution. Paul was using the words of Job xiii. 16, consequently "salvation" has a quite general sense. 21. Cf. Col. iii. 4; Gal. ii. 20. 22. Though death would be "gain" (ver. 21) still Paul was not saying unreservedly that he wanted to die; life in the flesh meant fruitful labor. 23, 24. Thus he found himself between two attractions: death with its rich reward, being "with

Christ"; and life with its opportunity of service. 25, 26. On the whole, he feels that life in the flesh is still to be his lot, and that they will rejoice in seeing him again.

### 3. Exhortations (i. 27-ii. 18).

Paul now turns from speaking of himself to exhort or advise his church regarding their faith and conduct.

(1) He exhorts them to live consistent, steadfast Christian lives (i. 27-30). 27. "Let your manner of life": i.e., as members of the community or church. 28. "Which" refers to the fact of not being frightened by their adversaries. The courage given His saints by God is also evidence of His judgment on their opponents. 29. Cf. Acts xiv. 22; 1 Thess. iii. 4. 30. The Philippians had *seen* some of the sufferings of the Apostle, cf. Acts xvi. 19ff; 1 Thess. ii. 2, and they had *heard* of others. Paul would have them learn by his example what they might expect to endure.

(2) Exhortation to unity and humility, after the example of Christ (ii. 1-11).

1, 2. Appeal for *unity*. Four grounds or reasons are urged: the "exhortation" or persuasion that there is in Christ (in all they know and have experienced of Him) the precious comfort of love, the sharing of all in the gifts of the same spirit, and the feelings of sympathy and compassion. To these he adds a personal appeal (ver. 2). 3, 4. Appeal for *humility*. Both of these appeals, especially the latter, are now supported by reminding them of the supreme example of self-denial and humility, Jesus Christ.

5. "Mind" is to be taken in a broad, comprehensive sense. 6-8. "Form" seems to be practically the same as "nature"; Christ was (is) *divine* (cf. Col. i. 14; 2 Cor. viii. 9). But, though divine, He did not count the being recognized and worshipped as equal with God as something to be *eagerly snatched* or seized, but was willing to attain this honor through the way of humiliation, even of the Cross. 9. Then came the exaltation, already His by right. 11. Cf. Acts ii. 36; 1 Cor. xii. 3.

(3) Appeal to them to apply themselves most seriously to their own salvation (ii. 12-18). These verses continue the thought of vers. 1-4.

12. Emphasis on their own responsibility. Under Paul's own guidance they had always done well. Now, in his absence let them be all the more in earnest to *obey* (God). *Each one* must "work out," i.e., "make sure" or "accomplish" his salvation.

13. But man does not do it all. God "works in" man to do His good will and a large part of man's "working out" his salvation consists in making use of God's "inworking." 15. "Blameless" in the sight of others, and with "clear conscience" (better than "harmless") in reference to ourselves (cf. Jesus' words, Mt. x. 16; vi. 22, 23). On the disciple of Christ as a light cf. Mt. v. 14-16. 16. Their faithfulness to the end will be evidence in the day of judgment of Paul's efficient work. Cf. 1 Thess. ii. 19; 2 Cor. i. 14. 17, 18. The simple meaning is: even if in my labors in behalf of your faith I should be called upon to lay down my life (as a martyr), I should rejoice, for myself and for you, because you have attained to faith, and I should ask you to rejoice with me.

4. Information regarding Timothy and Epaphroditus (ii. 19-30).

(1) Regarding Timothy (ii. 19-24).

19. "In the Lord": Paul always planned this, his own plans being dependent on the Lord's will. Timothy had been with Paul probably during the whole of his stay in Rome. The plan now was for Timothy to go to Philippi and bring Paul word again, not necessarily at Rome in case Paul was released soon. 21. Evidently some of Paul's friends had bitterly disappointed him (cf. 2 Tim. i. 15; iv. 10, 16). The devoted friendship of such a one as Timothy was a great comfort to him. 23, 24. Paul was expecting to be released soon. It is not necessary to suppose that he was planning to go to Philippi immediately after being set free.

(2) Regarding Epaphroditus (ii. 25-30). This passage (with iv. 18) gives us these facts concerning Epaphroditus: He was a trusted member of the church of Philippi and had been sent by them with a gift of money to Paul (iv. 18). In Rome he assisted Paul in the work of Christ (ver. 30) and while thus engaged was taken seriously sick. The news of his sickness had caused anxiety at Philippi. Having recovered, he was eager to get back and Paul therefore decided to send him home with

this letter as his message to his beloved church. The whole passage reveals the tenderer side of Paul's nature, of which we think too little.

5. Warnings against false teachings (iii. 1-iv. 1).

(1) Against Judaizers and their doctrines (iii. 1-16).

1a. The first half of ver. 1 is not closely connected with what follows. Probably Paul began it with the intention of concluding the letter with a few practical exhortations, was interrupted, and when he resumed decided to warn against false teachings first. Hence the real continuation of iii. 1a is found at iv. 2.

1b. By "the same things" certain advice which he had given them on former occasions may be meant. In that case it refers to what follows in ver. 2ff. 2. By these opprobrious terms Paul meant those who were teaching false doctrines. "Circumcision": the Greek term implies a word-play on circumcision, emphasizing the mere cutting of the flesh. The reference is to those who taught that circumcision was necessary to salvation (see Galatians). 3. Paul here repeats his fundamental doctrine that circumcision is no longer necessary, its place being taken by true spiritual service and dependence on Christ alone. 4-6. Paul now argues against any such dependence on Jewish rites or prerogatives by citing *his own case*. He once boasted in such things, now he has left them all behind. 7. "Loss," i.e., relatively, in comparison with the gain in Christ, and positively, in case they should be valued as of any worth in *addition* to what is given by Christ. 8. The *new* aim and effort,—to gain Christ, i.e., to realize to the full all that is offered and made possible in Him. The following verses indicate what this is. 9. Cf. the argument of Rom. i.-viii. 10, 11. Cf. Col. iii. 1-4; i. 24; Rom. vi. 1. The next paragraph (vers. 12-16) seems to be aimed, in part at least, at any who might be inclined to boast in their present attainments in sanctity. By speaking frankly of his own state, Paul could easily and effectively convey the warning. 12. "Already obtained": i.e., when I was converted. "Am made perfect": better "have been perfected," i.e., since my conversion. 13. A frank confession. Not perfection attained, but *pressing on to attain it* was Paul's motto. 14. The figure is that of the eager runner on the race course. 15. "Perfect" is

used here in the sense of "mature," "well grounded in the fundamental principles." "Us" includes Paul and those who think of Christian truth as he does. As for others, Paul is sure God will lead them to the truth. 16. Cf. Paul's question to the Galatians (Gal. iii. 2f).

(2) Warning against that false view of the Christian life which allows full liberty to sin (iii. 17-iv. 1). Such seems to be the main import of this paragraph. The false view is that which Paul deals with so effectually in Rom. vi.

17. Cf. 1 Thess. i. 6; 2 Thess. iii. 7, 9; 1 Cor. iv. 17; xi. 1. 18. The "many" were, doubtless, church members, but perhaps not at Philippi. 20. Cf. Col. iii. 1-4. 21. Cf. 1 Cor. xv. 42ff.

6. Concluding exhortations (iv. 2-9).

The Apostle now resumes the thought dropped at iii. 1a, and proceeds to bring the Epistle to a close.

(1) Exhortations to certain individuals in the church (iv. 2, 3).

3. Who this "true yoke-fellow" was is unknown. By "these women," Euodias and Syntyche are meant. They were probably among Paul's first converts in Philippi. The "book of life" is the list of the redeemed. Cf. Dan. xii. 1; Lk. x. 20; Rev. iii. 5; xx. 12, 15; xxi. 27, etc. The use of this expression here may indicate that some of those referred to had already passed away.

(2) General exhortations to all (iv. 4-9). Compare 1 Thess. v. 13-22. 5. Cf. note on 1 Cor. xvi. 22. 6. Cf. Jesus' teaching in Mt. vi. 25-34. 7. Cf. Note on Col. iii. 15. "Passeth all understanding": i.e., surpasses or exceeds our power of thought to measure or limit or define. It is *God's presence* with His own. 8. Here we see the noble optimism of Paul. Think, consider, plan the *best* things. 9. Cf. iii. 17 above.

7. Grateful acknowledgment of their former gifts and of the one recently sent by Epaphroditus (iv. 10-19).

10. "Now at length": i.e., since his last visit to them, some five years before. 15, 16. In addition cf. what Paul says in 2 Cor. xi. 9.

The conclusion of the Epistle (doxology, salutation, and benediction, iv. 20-23).

22. "Cæsar's household": if Paul, during his trial, had been transferred to the neighborhood of the palace, he had the opportunity of making known the Gospel to members of the Imperial household, which was very large, and included many intelligent Greek slaves.

### Review-study of Philippians

Where and when did Paul write Philippians? What changes had come about in his circumstances since he wrote Colossians? Where was Philippi? When and how was the church there founded? Review the account in Acts xvi. What can you say of the relations between Paul and this church? Who was Epaphroditus?

Give a complete outline of this Epistle. Read carefully and state in your own words the full sense of i. 7.

What is implied as to the progress of the Gospel in Rome in i. 12-18? How did the possibility of a martyr's death affect Paul (cf. i. 21-26)?

What four reasons for unity and harmony in the church do we find in ii. 2? What view of Christ's earthly manifestation is implied in ii. 5-8? State in your own words the general thought of iii. 4-11 and iii. 12-16.